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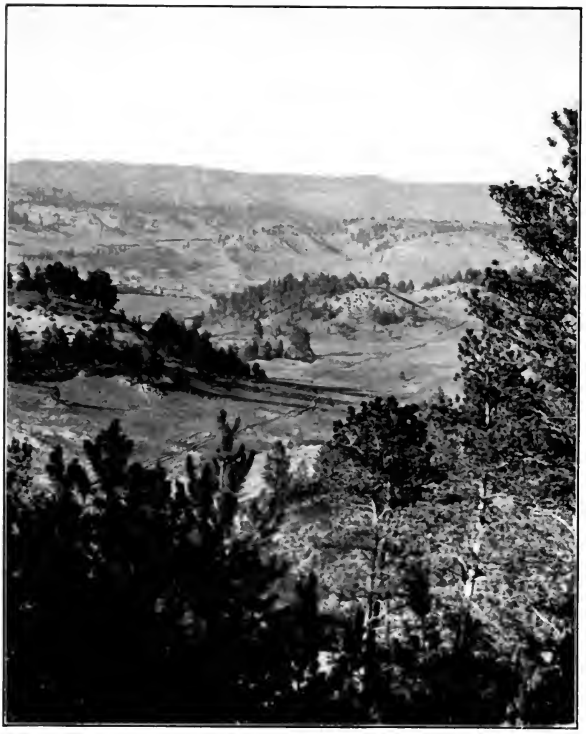

"When the last free trail is a prim, fenced lane
And our graves grow weeds through forgetful Mays,
Richer and statelier then you'll reign,
Mother of men whom the world will praise.
And your sons will love you and sigh for you,
Labor and battle and die for you,
But never the fondest will understand
The way we have loved you, young, young land."

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SUN AND SADDLE LEATHER

INCLUDING "GRASS GROWN TRAILS" AND NEW POEMS

BY

BADGER CLARK

Illustrations from Photographs by
L. A. HUFFMAN

FIFTH EDITION

BOSTON
RICHARD G. BADGER
THE GORHAM PRESS

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MADE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

THE GORHAM PRESS, BOSTON, U. S. A.

TO MY FATHER,

who, in his long life, has seldom been conscious of a man's rough exterior, or unconscious of his obscurest virtue.

471374

PREFACE

Cowboys are the sternest critics of those who would represent the West. No hypocrisy, no bluff, no pose can evade them.

Yet cowboys have made Badger Clark's songs their own. So readily have they circulated that often the man who sings the song could not tell you where it started. Many of the poems have become folk songs of the West, we may say of America, for they speak of freedom and the open.

Generous has been the praise given *Sun and Saddle Leather,* but perhaps no criticism has summed up the work so satisfactorily as the comment of the old cow man who said, "You can break me if there's a dead poem in the book, I read the hull of it. Who in H— is this kid Clark, anyway? I don't know how he knowed, but he *knows.*"

That is what proves Badger Clark the real

poet. He knows. Beyond his wonderful presentation of the West is the quality of universal appeal that makes his work real art. He has tied the West to the universe.

The old cow man is not the only one who has wondered who Badger Clark was. Charles Wharton Stork speaking of *Sun and Saddle Leather*, said, "It has splendid flavor and fine artistic handling as well. I should like to know more of the author, whether he was a cow puncher or merely got inside his psychology by imagination."

Badger Clark was brought up in the West. As a boy he lived in Deadwood, South Dakota. The town at that time was trying to live down the reputation for exuberant indecorum which she had acquired during the gold rush; but her five churches operating two hours a week could make little headway against the competition of two

dance halls and twenty-six saloons running twenty-four hours a day.

After Clark had grown up, in the cow country near the Mexican border, he stumbled unexpectedly into paradise. He was given charge of a small ranch and the responsibility for a bunch of cattle just large enough to amuse him, but too small to demand a full day's work once a month. The sky was persistently blue, the sunlight was richly golden, the folds of the barren mountains and the wide reaches of the range were full of many lovely colors, and his nearest neighbor was eight miles away.

The cow men who dropped in for a meal now and then in the course of their interminable riding appeared to have ridden directly out of books of adventure, with old-young faces full of sun wrinkles, careless mouths full of bad grammar, strange oaths and

stranger yarns, and hearts for the most part as open and shadowless as the country they daily ranged.

In the evenings as Clark placed his boot heels on the porch railing, smote the strings of his guitar and broke the tense silence of the warm, dry twilight with song, he often wondered, as his eyes rested dreamily on the spikey yuccas that stood out sharp and black against the clear lemon color of the sunset west, why hermit life in the desert was traditionally a sad, penitential affair.

In a letter to his mother a month or two after settling in Arizona he found prose too weak to express his utter content and perpetrated his first verses. She, with natural pride, sent the verses to a magazine, the old *Pacific Monthly,* and a week or two later the desert dweller was astonished beyond measure to receive his first editorial check. The

discovery that certain people in the world were willing to pay money for such rhymes as he could write bent the whole course of his subsequent life, for good or evil, and the occasional lyric impulse hardened into a habit which has consumed much of his time and most of his serious thought since that date. The verses written to his mother were *Ridin'*, the first poem in his first book, *Sun and Saddle Leather,* and the greater part of the poems in both *Sun and Saddle Leather* and *Grass Grown Trails* were written in Arizona.

Sun and Saddle Leather and *Grass Grown Trails* are books of Western songs, simple and ringing and yet with an ample vision that makes them unique among poems written in a local vernacular. The spirit of them is eternal, the spirit of youth in the open, and their background is "God's Reserves," the vast reach of Western mesa and plain that

will always remain free—"the way that it was when the world was new."

Every poem carries a breath of plains, wind-flavored with a tang of camp smoke; and, varied as they are in tune and tone, they do not contain a single note that is labored or unnatural. They are of native Western stock, as indigenous to the soil as the agile cow ponies whose hoofs evidently beat the time for their swinging measures; and it is this quality, as well as their appealing music, that has already given them such wide popularity, East and West.

That they were born in the saddle and written for love rather than for publication is a conviction that the reader of them can hardly escape. From the impish merriment of *From Town* to the deep but fearless piety of *The Cowboy's Prayer,* these songs ring true; and are as healthy as the big, bright country whence they came.

In 1917, about the time our first edition of *Sun and Saddle Leather* began to run low, we fortunately discovered L. A. Huffman, of Miles City, Montana, the illustrator who in 1878 began taking photographs from the saddle with crude cameras he made over to meet his needs. These same views were the first of the now famous "Huffman Pictures," beginning with the Indians and buffaloes round about Ft. Keogh on the Yellowstone where he was post photographer for General Miles' army during those stirring territorial days. In a recent letter Mr. Huffman says, "I have just come back from a trip to 'Powder River' and along the Wyoming-Montana border. It's all too true! Clark saw and wrote it none too soon in *The Passing of the Trail.*"

The trail's a lane, the trail's a lane.
Dead is the branding fire.
The prairies wild are tame and mild
All close-corralled with wire.
The sunburnt demigods who ranged

And laughed and loved so free
Have topped the last divide, or changed
To men like you and me.

Grass Grown Trails lead us away from our pavements of stone and sidewalks of brick, into the real outdoors, "a world of unfenced room,"—the wind in the chaparral, the bunch grass, the sagebrush with—

Dreams untold and sunset gold
Cussin', sweat, and meals.

All through the book walks high idealism side by side with unflinching reality, just as they do in life. In Red's Saloon, while the glasses clink and clash upon the sloppy bar, we hear the piano's dreamy voice. Funny place for music, though, back in Red's Saloon.

Scufflin feet and thud of fist,
Curses hot as fire—
Still the music sang of love
Longin', lost desire

Dreams that never could have been,
Joys that couldn't stay—
While the man upon the floor
Wiped the blood away.

Badger Clark possesses in full measure the two qualities which go farthest to make popularity: sentiment and humor. Yet good horseman that he is, he knows when to rein in both of them. His sentiment is always restrained, his humor is never buffoonery. Often humor is combined with a deeper feeling as in *The Locoed Horse.* Don't all of us know plenty of locoed horses that walk round and round in circles seeking something that is not to be found?

The poems echo the wild, free, swinging rhythm of the mustang's hoofs over the plains. Badger Clark knows horses and cattle and sheep, just as he knows the men who herd them, and the wild, free country in which they roam.

Take *The Sheep-Herder,* for instance. Could Browning have got under the Sheep-Herder's skin any better than Badger Clark? The psychology and dialect are there.

> And nothin', far as I kin see
> Around the circle's sweep,
> But sky and plains, my dreams and me
> And them infernal sheep.

We find, too, that the Sheep-Herder is a critic of the realistic school when it comes to a volume of pastoral poetry given him by "an Eastern lunger,"

> But though that poet sure is deep
> And has sweet things to say,
> He never seen a herd of sheep
> Or smelt them, anyway.

And who shall say that the criticism is not a just one?

Many critics have compared Badger Clark not unfavorably with Kipling and Service.

Just for a little variety let us compare him with Browning once more. Don't these verses from *The Night Herder* suggest *Meeting At Night?*

There's a pass where the black shadows shiver,
Then a desert all silvery blue,
A divide, and the breaks by the river,
Then a light in the valley and you.

Another Western dramatic monologue is *Freightin'*.

Chuck an' luck! luck an' chuck!
Life's more miss than hit,
Luck's the thing I dream and sing
Chuck is all I git.

How is that for onomatopoeia? Can't you hear the old wheels creak?

The figures of speech are always vivid and unexpected.

It shocked me like a bullet when the dogs began to bark.

Doesn't this make a picture for you?

A little cloud of saddle blanket size.

The figures of speech in this next passage are almost scriptural in their liberty.

You've seen your fat fields ripplin' with the treasure
that they hoard,
Have you seen a mountain stretch and rub its
eyes?
Or bare hills lift their streaming faces up and thank
the Lord,
Fairly tremblin' with their gladness and surprise?

Badger Clark has a wonderful sense for words,—words that no one else would think of using, but which charmingly clothe his meaning. How is this for a bit of vivid language?

Oh days whoop by with swingin' lope
And days slip by asleepin'.

Would you think of describing the wide stretches of Western country as "a world of unfenced room?" No, neither should I. Did you ever see "the dark river waves wrinkle?"

I have, but I should never have thought of anything but the self-evident *ripple.* Here is a wonderful collection of words that sing a delightful melody:

With happy hoofs that shuffled to the singin' saddle leather
And laughin' wind that ruffled sunny miles of chaparral.

"But to be an artist," you say, "a poet who selects a limited area for the background of his work must show that here, as everywhere, life is always the same." You will find all that and more in *The Old Prospector* and *On The Drive.* As the old prospector says,

Why, you are all prospectors, bless you!
I'm only a branch of the trade.

Take these lines from *On the Drive*

But all the world's a movin' herd
Where men drift on together
And some may spur and some are spurred
But most are horns and leather.

The outlaws fight to break away,
  The weak and lame are crawlin',
But only dead ones quit the play,
  The dust cloud and the bawlin'.

Some dream ahead to pastures green,
  Some stare ahead to slaughter,
But, anyway, night drops between
  And brings us rest and water.

As *The San Francisco Call* says:

And through it all is the song of the chaparral, the bunch grass and the sage-brush, interpreted with just the poetic sympathy that one might expect to develop in such an environment. There is also the revolt against confinement within the man-made city that is natural to one who loves to talk of nature in its primeval glories, the forest ranger, the old prospector, the half-breed, the buffalo as we knew him, and even the coyote and the poor, locoed horse.

"And who," you say, "is this Badger Clark, anyway? What manner of man is he?" In his own words, he is "an individual from the neighborhood of Bitter Creek who can lick his weight in wild cats and habitually cooks and eats his dead."

William S. Hart, so staunchly admired by cowboys says of the book:

May these trails never be wholly obliterated! I love the West and them, and thoroughly appreciate anything which so beautifully illustrates and typifies it as this last volume of Badger Clark's does.

As a portrayer of Nature, Badger Clark uses all the freedom and originality of a Turner. How is the atmosphere of this bit from *The Rains?*

It's sun and sun without a change the lazy length
o' May
And all the little sun things own the land.
The horned toad basks and swells himse'f; the
bright swifts dart and play;
The rattler hunts or dozes in the sand.

The wind comes off the desert like it brushed a bed
of coals;
The sickly range grass withers down and fails;
The bony cattle bawl around the dryin' water holes,
Then stagger off along the stony trails.

The real message of the book is an invitation to follow all Grass Grown Trails,

whether they are in the West, the East, the North, or the South.

You're welcome to what the town gives you,
To prizes of laurel and rose,
But leave me the song in the pine tops,
The breath of a wind from the snows.
With mountains of green all around me
And mountains of white up above
And mountains of blue down the sky-line,
I'll follow the trail that I love.

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Ma-Ki-o-nēs

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And your sons will love you and sigh for you,
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SUN AND SADDLE LEATHER

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

RIDIN'

There is some that like the city—
  Grass that's curried smooth and green,
Theaytres and stranglin' collars,
  Wagons run by gasoline—
But for me it's hawse and saddle
  Every day without a change,
And a desert sun a-blazin'
  On a hundred miles of range.

Just a-ridin', a-ridin' —
  Desert ripplin' in the sun,
Mountains blue along the skyline—
  I don't envy anyone
    When I'm ridin'.

When my feet is in the stirrups
And my hawse is on the bust,
With his hoofs a-flashin' lightnin'
From a cloud of golden dust,
And the bawlin' of the cattle
Is a-comin' down the wind
Then a finer life than ridin'
Would be mighty hard to find.

Just a-ridin', a-ridin'—
Splittin' long cracks through the air,
Stirrin' up a baby cyclone,
Rippin' up the prickly pear
As I'm ridin'.

I don't need no art exhibits
When the sunset does her best,
Paintin' everlastin' glory
On the mountains to the west
And your opery looks foolish
When the night-bird starts his tune
And the desert's silver mounted
By the touches of the moon.

Just a-ridin', a-ridin',
Who kin envy kings and czars
When the coyotes down the valley
Are a-singin' to the stars,
If he's ridin'?

When my earthly trail is ended
And my final bacon curled
And the last great roundup's finished
At the Home Ranch of the world
I don't want no harps nor haloes,
Robes nor other dressed up things—
Let me ride the starry ranges
On a pinto hawse with wings!

Just a-ridin', a-ridin'—
Nothin' I'd like half so well
As a-roundin' up the sinners
That have wandered out of Hell,
And a-ridin'.

THE SONG OF THE LEATHER

When my trail stretches out to the edge of the sky
Through the desert so empty and bright,
When I'm watchin' the miles as they go crawlin' by
And a-hopin' I'll get there by night,
Then my hawse never speaks through the long sunny day,
But my saddle he sings in his creaky old way:

"Easy—easy—easy—
For a temperit pace ain't a crime.
Let your mount hit it steady, but give him his ease,
For the sun hammers hard and there's never a breeze.
We kin get there in plenty of time."

When I'm after some critter that's hit the high lope,
And a-spurrin' my hawse till he flies,
When I'm watchin' the chances for throwin' my rope
And a-winkin' the sweat from my eyes,
Then the leathers they squeal with the lunge and the swing
And I work to the livelier tune that they sing:

"Reach 'im! reach 'im! reach 'im!
If you lather your hawse to the heel!
There's a time to be slow and a time to be quick;
Never mind if it's rough and the bushes are thick—
Pull your hat down and fling in the steel!"

When I've rustled all day till I'm achin' for rest
And I'm ordered a night-guard to ride,
With the tired little moon hangin' low in the west
And my sleepiness fightin' my pride,
Then I nod and I blink at the dark herd below
And the saddle he sings as my hawse paces slow:

"Sleepy—sleepy—sleepy—
We was ordered a close watch to keep,
But I'll sing you a song in a drowsy old key;
All the world is a-snoozin' so why shouldn't we?
Go to sleep, pardner mine, go to sleep."

A BAD HALF HOUR

Wonder why I feel so restless;
  Moon is shinin' still and bright,
Cattle all is restin' easy,
  But I just kaint sleep tonight.
Ain't no cactus in my blankets,
  Don't know why they feel so hard—
'Less it's Warblin' Jim a-singin'
  "Annie Laurie" out on guard.

"Annie Laurie"—wish he'd quit it!
  Couldn't sleep now if I tried.
Makes the night seem big and lonesome,
  And my throat feels sore inside.
How *my* Annie used to sing it!
  And it sounded good and gay
Nights I drove her home from dances
  When the east was turnin' gray.

Yes, "her brow was like the snowdrift"
  And her eyes like quiet streams,
"And her face"—I still kin see it
  Much too frequent in my dreams;
And her hand was soft and trembly
  That night underneath the tree,
When I couldn't help but tell her
  She was "all the world to me."

But her folks said I was "shif'less,"
  "Wild," "unsettled,"—they was right,
For I leaned to punchin' cattle
  And I'm at it still tonight.
And she married young Doc Wilkins—
  Oh my Lord! but that was hard!
Wish that fool would quit his singin'
  "Annie Laurie" out on guard!

Oh, I just kaint stand it thinkin'
  Of the things that happened then.
Good old times, and all apast me!
  Never seem to come again—
My turn? Sure. I'll come a-runnin'.
  Warm me up some coffee, pard—
But I'll stop that Jim from singin'
  "Annie Laurie" out on guard.

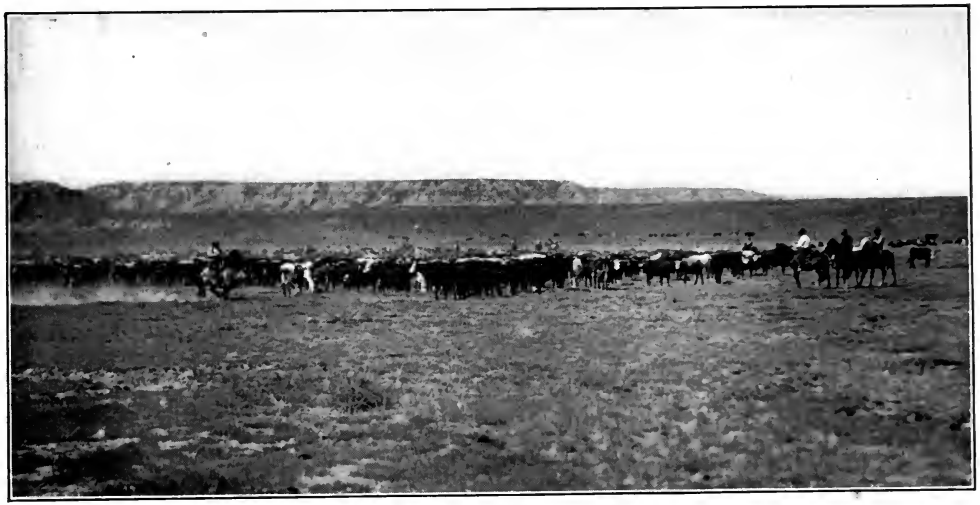
FROM TOWN

We're the children of the open and we hate
the haunts o' men,
But we had to come to town to get the
mail.
And we're ridin' home at daybreak—'cause
the air is cooler then—
All 'cept one of us that stopped behind in
jail.
Shorty's nose won't bear paradin', Bill's off
eye is darkly fadin',
All our toilets show a touch of disarray,
For we found that city life is a constant round
of strife
And we ain't the breed for shyin' from a
fray.

*Chant your warwhoop, pardners dear, while
the east turns pale with fear
And the chaparral is tremblin' all aroun'*

For we're wicked to the marrer; we're a midnight dream of terror
When we're ridin' up the rocky trail from town!

We acquired our hasty temper from our friend, the centipede.
From the rattlesnake we learnt to guard our rights.
We have gathered fightin' pointers from the famous bronco steed
And the bobcat teached us reppertee that bites.
So when some high-collared herrin' jeered the garb that I was wearin'
'Twasn't long till we had got where talkin' ends,
And he et his illbred chat, with a sauce of derby hat,
While my merry pardners entertained his friends.



"When my feet is in the stirrups
And my hawse is on the bust."

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Sing 'er out, my buckeroos! Let the desert hear the news.
Tell the stars the way we rubbed the haughty down.
We're the fiercest wolves a-prowlin' and it's just our night for howlin'
When we're ridin' up the rocky trail from town.

Since the days that Lot and Abram split the Jordan range in halves,
Just to fix it so their punchers wouldn't fight,
Since old Jacob skinned his dad-in-law for six years' crop of calves
And then hit the trail for Canaan in the night,
There has been a taste for battle 'mong the men that follow cattle
And a love of doin' things that's wild and strange,

And the warmth of Laban's words when
he missed his speckled herds
Still is useful in the language of the range.

Sing 'er out, my bold coyotes! leather fists
and leather throats,
For we wear the brand of Ishm'el like a
crown.
We're the sons o' desolation, we're the out-
laws of creation—
Ee—yow! a-ridin' up the rocky trail from
town!

A COWBOY'S PRAYER

(*Written for Mother*)

Oh Lord, I've never lived where churches grow.
I love creation better as it stood
That day You finished it so long ago
And looked upon Your work and called it good.
I know that others find You in the light
That's sifted down through tinted window panes,
And yet I seem to feel You near tonight
In this dim, quiet starlight on the plains.

I thank You, Lord, that I am placed so well,
That You have made my freedom so complete;
That I'm no slave of whistle, clock or bell,
Nor weak-eyed prisoner of wall and street.

Just let me live my life as I've begun
And give me work that's open to the sky;
Make me a pardner of the wind and sun,
And I won't ask a life that's soft or high.

Let me be easy on the man that's down;
Let me be square and generous with all.
I'm careless sometimes, Lord, when I'm in town,
But never let 'em say I'm mean or small!
Make me as big and open as the plains,
As honest as the hawse between my knees,
Clean as the wind that blows behind the rains,
Free as the hawk that circles down the breeze!

Forgive me, Lord, if sometimes I forget.
You know about the reasons that are hid.
You understand the things that gall and fret;
You know me better than my mother did.

Just keep an eye on all that's done and said
And right me, sometimes, when I turn aside,
And guide me on the long, dim trail ahead
That stretches upward toward the Great Divide.

THE CHRISTMAS TRAIL

The wind is blowin' cold down the mountain tips of snow
And 'cross the ranges layin' brown and dead;
It's cryin' through the valley trees that wear the mistletoe
And mournin' with the gray clouds overhead.
Yet it's sweet with the beat of my little hawse's feet
And I whistle like the air was warm and blue,
For I'm ridin' up the Christmas trail to you,
Old folks,
I'm a-ridin' up the Christmas trail to you.

Oh, mebbe it was good when the whinny of
the Spring
Had wheedled me to hoppin' of the bars,
And livin' in the shadow of a sailin' buz-
zard's wing
And sleepin' underneath a roof of stars.
But the bright campfire light only dances for
a night,
While the home-fire burns forever clear
and true,
So 'round the year I circle back to you,
Old folks,
'Round the rovin' year I circle back to you.

Oh, mebbe it was good when the reckless
Summer sun
Had shot a charge of fire through my
veins,
And I milled around the whiskey and the
fightin' and the fun

'Mong the other mav'ricks drifted from the plains.
Ay' the pot bubbled hot, while you reckoned I'd forgot,
And the devil smacked the young blood in his stew,
Yet I'm lovin' every mile that's nearer you, Good folks,
Lovin' every blessed mile that's nearer you.

Oh, mebbe it was good at the roundup in the Fall
When the clouds of bawlin' dust before us ran,
And the pride of rope and saddle was a-drivin' of us all
To a stretch of nerve and muscle, man and man.
But the pride sort of died when the man got weary eyed;

'Twas a sleepy boy that rode the night-guard through,
And he dreamed himself along a trail to you,
Old folks,
Dreamed himself along a happy trail to you.

The coyote's Winter howl cuts the dusk behind the hill,
But the ranch's shinin' window I kin see,
And though I don't deserve it and, I reckon, never will,
There'll be room beside the fire kep' for me.
Skimp my plate 'cause I'm late. Let me hit the old kid gait,
For tonight I'm stumblin' tired of the new
And I'm ridin' up the Christmas trail to you,
Old folks,
I'm a-ridin' up the Christmas trail to you.

A BORDER AFFAIR

Spanish is the lovin' tongue,
  Soft as music, light as spray.
'Twas a girl I learnt it from,
  Livin' down Sonora way.
I don't look much like a lover,
Yet I say her love words over
Often when I'm all alone—
  "Mi amor, mi corazon."

Nights when she knew where I'd ride
  She would listen for my spurs,
Fling the big door open wide,
  Raise them laughin' eyes of her
And my heart would nigh stop beatin'
When I heard her tender greeting',
  Whispered soft for me alone—
  "Mi amor! mi corazon!"

Moonlight in the patio,
  Old Señora noddin' near,
Me and Juana talkin' low
  So the Madre couldn't hear—
How those hours would go a-flyin'!
And too soon I'd hear her sighin'
  In her little sorry tone—
  "Adios, mi corazon!"

But one time I had to fly
  For a foolish gamblin' fight,
And we said a swift goodbye
  In that black, unlucky night.
When I'd loosed her arms from clingin'
With her words the hoofs kep' ringin'
  As I galloped north alone—
  "Adios, mi corazon!"

Never seen her since that night,
I kain't cross the Line, you know.
She was Mex and I was white;
Like as not it's better so.
Yet I've always sort of missed her
Since that last wild night I kissed her,
Left her heart and lost my own—
"Adios, mi corazon!"

THE BUNK-HOUSE ORCHESTRA

Wrangle up your mouth-harps, drag your
banjo out,
Tune your old guitarra till she twangs right
stout,
For the snow is on the mountains and the
wind is on the plain,
But we'll cut the chimney's moanin' with a
livelier refrain.

*Shinin' 'dobe fireplace, shadows on the
wall —*
*(See old Shorty's friv'lous toes a-twitchin'
at the call:)*
*It's the best grand high that there is within
the law*
*When seven jolly punchers tackle "Turkey
in the Straw."*

Freezy was the day's ride, lengthy was the trail,
Ev'ry steer was haughty with a high arched tail,
But we held 'em and we shoved 'em, for our longin' hearts were tried
By a yearnin' for tobacker and our dear fireside.

Swing 'er into stop-time, don't you let 'er droop!
(You're about as tuneful as a coyote with the croup!)
Ay, the cold wind bit when we drifted down the draw,
But we drifted on to comfort and to "Turkey in the Straw."

Snarlin' when the rain whipped, cussin' at the ford—
Ev'ry mile of twenty was a long discord,
But the night is brimmin' music and its glory is complete
When the eye is razzle-dazzled by the flip o' Shorty's feet!

Snappy for the dance, now, till she up and shoots!
(Don't he beat the devil's wife for jiggin' in 'is boots?)
Shorty got throwed high and we laughed till he was raw,
But tonight he's done forgot it prancin' "Turkey in the Straw."

Rainy dark or firelight, bacon rind or pie,
Livin' is a luxury that don't come high;
Oh, be happy and onruly while our years and
luck allow,
For we all must die or marry less than forty
years from now!

Lively on the last turn! lope 'er to the death!
(Reddy's soul is willin' but he's gettin' short o' breath.)
Ay, the storm wind sings and old trouble sucks his paw
When we have an hour of firelight set to "Turkey in the Straw."

THE OUTLAW

When my rope takes hold on a two-year-old,
By the foot or the neck or the horn,
He kin plunge and fight till his eyes go white
But I'll throw him as sure as you're born.
Though the taut ropes sing like a banjo string
And the latigoes creak and strain,
Yet I got no fear of an outlaw steer
And I'll tumble him on the plain.

For a man is a man, but a steer is a beast,
And the man is the boss of the herd,
And each of the bunch, from the biggest to least,
Must come down when he says the word.

When my leg swings 'cross on an outlaw hawse
And my spurs clinch into his hide,
He kin r'ar and pitch over hill and ditch,
But wherever he goes I'll ride.
Let 'im spin and flop like a crazy top
Or flit like a wind-whipped smoke,
But he'll know the feel of my rowelled heel
Till he's happy to own he's broke.

For a man is a man and a hawse is a brute,
And the hawse may be prince of his clan
But he'll bow to the bit and the steel-shod boot
And own that his boss is the man.

When the devil at rest underneath my vest
  Gets up and begins to paw
And my hot tongue strains at its bridle reins,
  Then I tackle the real outlaw.
When I get plumb riled and my sense goes
    wild
  And my temper is fractious growed,
If he'll hump his neck just a triflin' speck,
  Then it's dollars to dimes I'm throwed.

For a man is a man, but he's partly a
    beast.
  He kin brag till he makes you deaf,
But the one lone brute, from the west to
    the east,
  That he kaint quite break is himse'f.

THE LEGEND OF BOASTFUL BILL

At a roundup on the Gily,
One sweet mornin' long ago,
Ten of us was throwed right freely
By a hawse from Idaho.
And we thought he'd go-a-beggin'
For a man to break his pride
Till, a-hitchin' up one leggin,
Boastful Bill cut loose and cried—

"I'm a on'ry proposition for to hurt;
I fulfill my earthly mission with a quirt;
I kin ride the highest liver
'Tween the Gulf and Powder River,
And I'll break this thing as easy as I'd flirt."

So Bill climbed the Northern Fury
And they mangled up the air
Till a native of Missouri
Would have owned his brag was fair.
Though the plunges kep' him reelin'
And the wind it flapped his shirt,
Loud above the hawse's squealin'
We could hear our friend assert

"I'm the one to take such rakin's as a joke.
Some one hand me up the makin's of a smoke!
If you think my fame needs bright'nin'
W'y I'll rope a streak of lightnin'
And I'll cinch 'im up and spur 'im till he's broke."

Then one caper of repulsion
Broke that hawse's back in two.
Cinches snapped in the convulsion;
Skyward man and saddle flew.
Up he mounted, never laggin',
While we watched him through our tears,
And his last thin bit of braggin'
Came a-droppin' to our ears.

"If you'd ever watched my habits very close
You would know I've broke such rabbits by the gross.
I have kep' my talent hidin';
I'm too good for earthly ridin'
And I'm off to bust the lightnin's,—
Adios!"

Years have gone since that ascension.
Boastful Bill ain't never lit,
So we reckon that he's wrenchin'
Some celestial outlaw's bit.
When the night rain beats our slickers
And the wind is swift and stout
And the lightnin' flares and flickers,
We kin sometimes hear him shout—

"I'm a bronco-twistin' wonder on the fly;
I'm the ridin' son-of-thunder of the sky.
Hi! you earthlin's, shut your winders
While we're rippin' clouds to flinders.
If this blue-eyed darlin' kicks at you, you die!"

Stardust on his chaps and saddle,
Scornful still of jar and jolt,
He'll come back some day, astraddle
Of a bald-faced thunderbolt.
And the thin-skinned generation
Of that dim and distant day
Sure will stare with admiration
When they hear old Boastful say—

"I was first, as old rawhiders all confessed.
Now I'm last of all rough riders, and the best.
Huh, you soft and dainty floaters,
With your a'roplanes and motors —
Huh! are you the great grandchildren of the West!"

THE TIED MAVERICK

Lay on the iron! the tie holds fast
  And my wild record closes.
This maverick is down at last
  Just roped and tied with roses.
And one small girl's to blame for it,
Yet I don't fight with shame for it—
Lay on the iron; I'm game for it,
  Just roped and tied with roses.

I loped among the wildest band
  Of saddle-hatin' winners—
Gay colts that never felt a brand
  And scarred old outlaw sinners.
The wind was rein and guide to us;
The world was pasture wide to us
And our wild name was pride to us—
  High headed bronco sinners!

So, loose and light we raced and fought
And every range we tasted,
But now, since I'm corralled and caught,
I know them days were wasted.
From now, the all-day gait for me,
The trail that's hard but straight for me,
For down that trail, who'll wait for me!
Ay! them old days were wasted!

But though I'm broke, I'll never be
A saddle-marked old groaner,
For never worthless bronc like me
Got such a gentle owner.
There could be colt days glad as mine
Or outlaw runs as mad as mine
Or rope-flung falls as bad as mine,
But never such an owner.

Lay on the iron, and lay it red!
  I'll take it kind and clever.
Who wouldn't hold a prouder head
  To wear that mark forever?
I'll never break and stray from her;
I'd starve and die away from her.
Lay on the iron—it's play from her—
  And brand me hers forever!

A ROUNDUP LULLABY

Desert blue and silver in the still moonshine,
Coyote yappin' lazy on the hill,
Sleepy winks of lightnin' down the far sky line,
Time for millin' cattle to be still.

So—o, now, the lightnin's far away,
The coyote's nothin' skeery;
He's singin' to his dearie—
Hee—ya, tammalalleday!
Settle down, you cattle, till the mornin'.

Nothin' out the hazy range that you folks need,
Nothin' we kin see to take your eye.
Yet we got to watch you or you'd all stampede,
Plungin' down some royo bank to die.

So—o, now, for still the shadows stay;
The moon is slow and steady;
The sun comes when he's ready.
Hee—ya, tammalalleday!
No use runnin' out to meet the mornin'.

Cows and men are foolish when the light grows dim,
Dreamin' of a land too far to see.
There, you dream, is wavin' grass and streams that brim
And it often seems the same to me.

So—o, now, for dreams they never pay.
The dust it keeps us blinkin',
We're seven miles from drinkin'.
Hee—ya, tammalalleday!
But we got to stand it till the mornin'.

Mostly it's a moonlight world our trail winds through.
Kaint see much beyond our saddle horns.
Always far away is misty silver-blue;
Always underfoot it's rocks and thorns.

So—o, now. It must be this away—
The lonesome owl a-callin',
The mournful coyote squallin'.
Hee—ya, tammalalleday!
Mockin-birds don't sing until the mornin'.

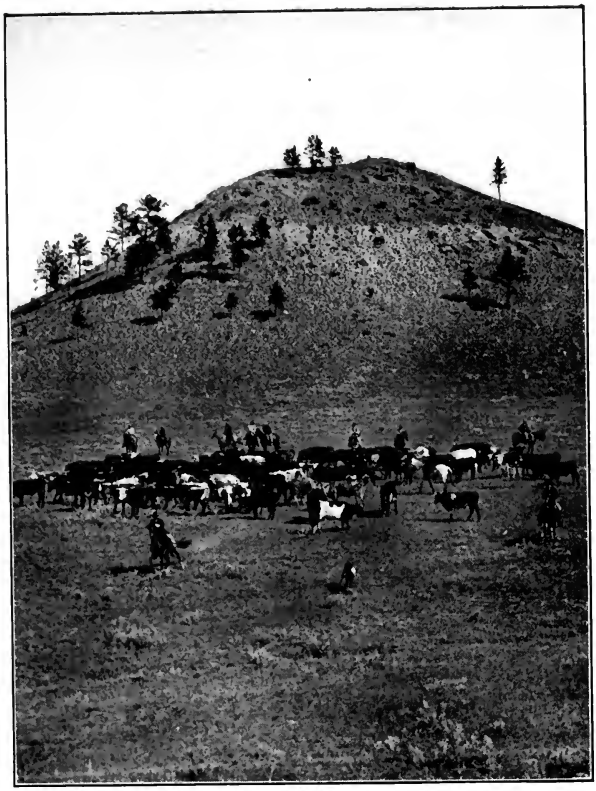
Always seein' 'wayoff dreams of silver-blue,
Always feelin' thorns that stab and sting.
Yet stampedin' never made a dream come true,
So I ride around myself and sing.

So—o, now, a man has got to stay,
A-likin' or a-hatin',
But workin' on and waitin'.
Hee—ya, tammalalleday!
All of us are waitin' for the mornin'.

THE TRAIL O' LOVE

My love was swift and slender
As an antelope at play,
And her eyes were gray and tender
As the east at break o' day,
And I sure was shaky hearted
And her flower face was pale
On that silver night we parted,
When I sang along the trail:

Forever—forever —
Oh, moon above the pine,
Like the matin' birds in Springtime,
I will twitter while you shine.
Rich as ore with gold a-glowin',
Sweet as sparklin' springs a-flowin',
Strong as redwoods ever growin',
So will be this love o' mine.



"There's a time to be slow and a time to be quick."

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I rode across the river
And beyond the far divide,
Till the echo of "forever"
Staggered faint behind and died.
For the long trail smiled and beckoned
And the free wind blowed so sweet,
That life's gayest tune, I reckoned,
Was my hawse's ringin' feet.

Forever—forever—
Oh, stars, look down and sigh,
For a poison spring will sparkle
And the trustin' drinker die.
And a rovin' bird will twitter
And a worthless rock will glitter
And the maiden's love is bitter
When the man's is proved a lie.

Last the rover's circle guidin'
Brought me where I used to be,
And I met her, gaily ridin'
With a smarter man than me.
Then I raised my dusty cover
But she didn't see nor hear,
So I hummed the old tune over,
Laughin' in my hawse's ear:

Forever—forever—
Oh, sun, look down and smile
If the snowflake specks the desert
Or the yucca blooms awhile.
Ay! what gloom the mountain covers
Where the driftin' cloud shade hovers!
Ay! the trail o' parted lovers,
Where "forever" lasts a mile!

BACHIN'

Our lives are hid; our trails are strange;
We're scattered through the West
In canyon cool, on blistered range
Or windy mountain crest.
Wherever Nature drops her ears
And bares her claws to scratch,
From Yuma to the north frontiers,
You'll likely find the bach',
You will,
The shy and sober bach'!

Our days are sun and storm and mist,
The same as any life,
Except that in our trouble list
We never count a wife.
Each has a reason why he's lone,
But keeps it 'neath his hat;
Or, if he's got to tell some one,

Confides it to his cat,
He does,
Just tells it to his cat.

We're young or old or slow or fast,
But all plumb versatyle.
The mighty bach' that fires the blast
Kin serve up beans in style.
The bach' that ropes the plungin' cows
Kin mix the biscuits true—
We earn our grub by drippin' brows
And cook it by 'em too,
We do,
We cook it by 'em too.

We like to breathe unbranded air,
Be free of foot and mind,
And go or stay, or sing or swear,
Whichever we're inclined.

An appetite, a conscience clear,
A pipe that's rich and old
Are loves that always bless and cheer
And never cry nor scold,
They don't.
They never cry nor scold.

Old Adam bached some ages back
And smoked his pipe so free,
A-loafin' in a palm-leaf shack
Beneath a mango tree.
He'd best have stuck to bachin' ways,
And scripture proves the same,
For Adam's only happy days
Was 'fore the woman came,
They was,
All 'fore the woman came.

THE GLORY TRAIL

'Way high up the Mogollons,
  Among the mountain tops,
A lion cleaned a yearlin's bones
  And licked his thankful chops,
When on the picture who should ride,
  A-trippin' down a slope,
But High-Chin Bob, with sinful pride
  And mav'rick-hungry rope.

"Oh, glory be to me," says he,
"And fame's unfadin' flowers!
All meddlin' hands are far away;
I ride my good top-hawse today
And I'm top-rope of the Lazy J—
Hi! kitty cat, you're ours!"

That lion licked his paw so brown
  And dreamed soft dreams of veal—
And then the circlin' loop sung down
  And roped him 'round his meal.

He yowled quick fury to the world
Till all the hills yelled back;
The top-hawse gave a snort and whirled
And Bob caught up the slack.

"Oh, glory be to me," laughs he.
"We hit the glory trail.
No human man as I have read
Darst loop a ragin' lion's head,
Nor ever hawse could drag one dead
Until we told the tale."

'Way high up the Mogollons
That top-hawse done his best,
Through whippin' brush and rattlin' stones,
From canyon-floor to crest.
But ever when Bob turned and hoped
A limp remains to find,
A red-eyed lion, belly roped
But healthy, loped behind.

"Oh, glory be to me," grunts he.
"This glory trail is rough,
Yet even till the Judgment Morn
I'll keep this dally 'round the horn,
For never any hero born
Could stoop to holler: 'Nuff!' "

Three suns had rode their circle home
Beyond the desert's rim,
And turned their star-herds loose to roam
The ranges high and dim;
Yet up and down and 'round and 'cross
Bob pounded, weak and wan,
For pride still glued him to his hawse
And glory drove him on.

"Oh, glory be to me," sighs he.
"He kaint be drug to death,
But now I know beyond a doubt
Them heroes I have read about
Was only fools that stuck it out
To end of mortal breath."

'Way high up the Mogollons
A prospect man did swear
That moon dreams melted down his bones
And hoisted up his hair:
A ribby cow-hawse thundered by,
A lion trailed along,
A rider, ga'nt but chin on high,
Yelled out a crazy song.

"Oh, glory be to me!" cries he,
"And to my noble noose!
Oh, stranger, tell my pards below
I took a rampin' dream in tow,
And if I never lay him low,
I'll never turn him loose!"

BACON

You're salty and greasy and smoky as sin
But of all grub we love you the best.
You stuck to us closer than nighest of kin
And helped us win out in the West,
You froze with us up on the Laramie trail;
You sweat with us down at Tucson;
When Injun was painted and white man was pale
You nerved us to grip our last chance by the tail
And load up our Colts and hang on.

You've sizzled by mountain and mesa and plain
Over campfires of sagebrush and oak;
The breezes that blow from the Platte to the main
Have carried your savory smoke.
You're friendly to miner or puncher or priest;

You're as good in December as May;
You always came in when the fresh meat had ceased
And the rough course of empire to westward was greased
By the bacon we fried on the way.

We've said that you weren't fit for white men to eat
And your virtues we often forget.
We've called you by names that I darsn't repeat,
But we love you and swear by you yet.
Here's to you, old bacon, fat, lean streak and rin',
All the westerners join in the toast,
From mesquite and yucca to sagebrush and pine,
From Canada down to the Mexican Line,
From Omaha out to the coast!

THE LOST PARDNER

I ride alone and hate the boys I meet.
Today, some way, their laughin' hurts me so.
I hate the mockin'-birds in the mesquite—
And yet I liked 'em just a week ago.
I hate the steady sun that glares, and glares!
The bird songs make me sore.
I seem the only thing on earth that cares
'Cause Al ain't here no more!

'Twas just a stumblin' hawse, a tangled spur—
And, when I raised him up so limp and weak,
One look before his eyes begun to blur
And then—the blood that wouldn't let 'im speak!

And him so strong, and yet so quick he died,
And after year on year
When we had always trailed it side by side,
He went—and left me here!

We loved each other in the way men do
And never spoke about it, Al and me,
But we both *knowed,* and knowin' it so true
Was more than any woman's kiss could be.
We knowed—and if the way was smooth or rough,
The weather shine or pour,
While I had him the rest seemed good enough—
But he ain't here no more!

What is there out beyond the last divide?
Seems like that country must be cold and dim.
He'd miss the sunny range he used to ride,
And he'd miss me, the same as I do him.

It's no use thinkin'—all I'd think or say
Could never make it clear.
Out that dim trail that only leads one way
He's gone—and left me here!

The range is empty and the trails are blind,
And I don't seem but half myself today.
I wait to hear him ridin' up behind
And feel his knee rub mine the good old way.
He's dead—and what that means no man kin tell.
Some call it "gone before."
Where? I don't know, but God! I know so well
That he ain't here no more!

GOD'S RESERVES

One time, 'way back where the year marks fade,
God said: "I see I must lose my West,
The prettiest part of the world I made,
The place where I've always come to rest,
For the White Man grows till he fights for bread
And he begs and prays for a chance to spread.

"Yet I won't give all of my last retreat;
I'll help him to fight his long trail through,
But I'll keep some land from his field and street
The way that it was when the world was new.
He'll cry for it all, for that's his way,
And yet he may understand some day."

And so, from the painted Bad Lands, 'way
To the sun-beat home of the 'Pache kin,
God stripped some places to sand and clay
And dried up the beds where the streams had been.
He marked His reserves with these plain signs
And stationed His rangers to guard the lines.

Then the White Man came, as the East growed old,
And blazed his trail with the wreck of war.
He riled the rivers to hunt for gold
And found the stuff he was lookin' for;
Then he trampled the Injun trails to ruts
And gnashed through the hills with railroad cuts.

He flung out his barb-wire fences wide
And plowed up the ground where the grass was high.
He stripped off the trees from the mountain side
And ground out his ore where the streams run by,
Till last came the cities, with smoke and roar,
And the White Man was feelin' at home once more.

But Barrenness, Loneliness, suchlike things
That gall and grate on the White Man's nerves,
Was the rangers that camped by the bitter springs
And guarded the lines of God's reserves.
So the folks all shy from the desert land,
'Cept mebbe a few that kin understand.

There the world's the same as the day 'twas new,
With the land as clean as the smokeless sky
And never a noise as the years have flew,
But the sound of the warm wind driftin' by;
And there, alone, with the man's world far,
There's a chance to think who you really are.

And over the reach of the desert bare,
When the sun drops low and the day wind stills,
Sometimes you kin almost see Him there,
As He sits alone on the blue-gray hills,
A-thinkin' of things that's beyond our ken
And restin' Himself from the noise of men.

THE MARRIED MAN

There's an old pard of mine that sits by his door
And watches the evenin' skies.
He's sat there a thousand of evenin's before
And I reckon he will till he dies.
El pobre! I reckon he will till he dies,
And hear through the dim, quiet air
Far cattle that call and the crickets that cheep
And his woman a-singin' a kid to sleep
And the creak of her rockabye chair.

Once we made camp where the last light would fail
And the east wasn't white till we'd start,
But now he is deaf to the call of the trail
And the song of the restless heart.
El pobre! the song of the restless heart
That you hear in the wind from the dawn!

He's left it, with all the good, free-footed
things,
For a slow little song that a tired woman
sings
And a smoke when his dry day is gone.

I've rode in and told him of lands that were
strange,
Where I'd drifted from glory to dread.
He'd tell me the news of his little old range
And the cute things his kids had said!
El pobre! the cute things his kids had said!
And the way six-year Billy could ride!
And the dark would creep in from the gray
chaparral
And the woman would hum, while I pitied my
pal
And thought of him like he had died.

NOTE.—*"El pobre," Spanish, "Poor fellow."*

He rides in old circles and looks at old sights
And his life is as flat as a pond.
He loves the old skyline he watches of nights
And he don't seem to care for beyond.
El pobre! he don't seem to dream of beyond,
Nor the room he could find, there, for joy.
"Ain't you ever oneasy?" says I one day.
But he only just smiled in a pityin' way
While he braided a quirt for his boy.

He preaches that I orter fold up my wings
And that even wild geese find a nest.
That "woman" and "wimmen" are different things
And a saddle nap isn't a rest.
El pobre! he's more for the shade and the rest
And he's less for the wind and the fight,
Yet out in strange hills, when the blue shadows rise

And I'm tired from the wind and the sun in my eyes,
I wonder, sometimes, if he's right.

I've courted the wind and I've followed her free
From the snows that the low stars have kissed
To the heave and the dip of the wavy old sea,
Yet I reckon there's somethin' I've missed.
El pobre! Yes, mebbe there's somethin' I've missed,
And it mebbe is more than I've won—
Just a door that's my own, while the cool shadows creep,
And a woman a-singin' my kid to sleep
When I'm tired from the wind and the sun.

THE OLD COW MAN

I rode across a valley range
I hadn't seen for years.
The trail was all so spoilt and strange
It nearly fetched the tears.
I had to let ten fences down
(The fussy lanes ran wrong)
And each new line would make me frown
And hum a mournin' song.

Oh, it's squeak! squeak! squeak!
Hear 'em stretchin' of the wire!
The nester brand is on the land;
I reckon I'll retire,
While progress toots her brassy horn
And makes her motor buzz,
I thank the Lord I wasn't born
No later than I was.

'Twas good to live when all the sod,
  Without no fence nor fuss,
Belonged in pardnership to God,
  The Gover'ment and us.
With skyline bounds from east to west
  And room to go and come,
I loved my fellow man the best
  When he was scattered some.

Oh, it's squeak! squeak! squeak!
  Close and closer cramps the wire.
There's hardly play to back away
  And call a man a liar.
Their house has locks on every door;
  Their land is in a crate.
These ain't the plains of God no more,
  They're only real estate.

There's land where yet no ditchers dig
  Nor cranks experiment;
It's only lovely, free and big
  And isn't worth a cent.
I pray that them who come to spoil
  May wait till I am dead
Before they foul that blessed soil
  With fence and cabbage head.

Yet it's squeak! squeak! squeak!
  Far and farther crawls the wire.
To crowd and pinch another inch
  Is all their heart's desire.
The world is overstocked with men
  And some will see the day
When each must keep his little pen,
  But I'll be far away.

When my old soul hunts range and rest
  Beyond the last divide,
Just plant me in some stretch of West
  That's sunny, lone and wide.
Let cattle rub my tombstone down
  And coyotes mourn their kin,
Let hawses paw and tromp the moun'
  But don't you fence it in!

Oh, it's squeak! squeak! squeak!
  And they pen the land with wire.
They figure fence and copper cents
  Where we laughed 'round the fire.
Job cussed his birthday, night and morn,
  In his old land of Uz,
But I'm just glad I wasn't born
  No later than I was!

THE PLAINSMEN

Men of the older, gentler soil,
  Loving the things that their fathers wrought—
Worn old fields of their fathers' toil,
  Scarred old hills where their fathers fought—
Loving their land for each ancient trace,
Like a mother dear for her wrinkled face,
  Such as they never can understand
  The way we have loved you, young, young land!

Born of a free, world-wandering race,
  Little we yearned o'er an oft-turned sod.
What did we care for the fathers' place,
  Having ours fresh from the hand of God?
Who feared the strangeness or wiles of you
When from the unreckoned miles of you,

Thrilling the wind with a sweet command,
Youth unto youth called, young, young land?

North, where the hurrying seasons changed
Over great gray plains where the trails lay long,
Free as the sweeping Chinook we ranged,
Setting our days to a saddle song.
Through the icy challenge you flung to us,
Through your shy Spring kisses that clung to us,
Following far as the rainbow spanned,
Fiercely we wooed you, young, young land!

South, where the sullen black mountains guard
Limitless, shimmering lands of the sun,
Over blinding trails where the hoofs rang hard,

Laughing or cursing, we rode and won.
Drunk with the virgin white fire of you,
Hotter than thirst was desire of you;
Straight in our faces you burned your brand,
Marking your chosen ones, young, young land.

When did we long for the sheltered gloom
Of the older game with its cautious odds?
Gloried we always in sun and room,
Spending our strength like the younger gods.
By the wild sweet ardor that ran in us,
By the pain that tested the man in us,
By the shadowy springs and the glaring sand,
You were our true-love, young, young land.

When the last free trail is a prim, fenced lane
And our graves grow weeds through forgetful Mays,
Richer and statelier then you'll reign,
Mother of men whom the world will praise.
And your sons will love you and sigh for you,
Labor and battle and die for you,
But never the fondest will understand
The way we have loved you, young, young land.

THE WESTERNER

My fathers sleep on the sunrise plains,
  And each one sleeps alone.
Their trails may dim to the grass and rains,
  For I choose to make my own.
I lay proud claim to their blood and name,
  But I lean on no dead kin;
My name is mine, for the praise or scorn,
And the world began when I was born
  And the world is mine to win.

They built high towns on their old log sills,
  Where the great, slow rivers gleamed,
But with new, live rock from the savage hills
  I'll build as they only dreamed.
The smoke scarce dies where the trail camp lies,
  Till the rails glint down the pass;
The desert springs into fruit and wheat
And I lay the stones of a solid street
  Over yesterday's untrod grass.

I waste no thought on my neighbor's birth
  Or the way he makes his prayer.
I grant him a white man's room on earth
  If his game is only square.
While he plays it straight I'll call him mate;
  If he cheats I drop him flat.
Old class and rank are a wornout lie,
For all clean men are as good as I,
  And a king is only that.

I dream no dreams of a nurse-maid state
  That will spoon me out my food.
A stout heart sings in the fray with fate
  And the shock and sweat are good.
From noon to noon all the earthly boon
  That I ask my God to spare
Is a little daily bread in store,
With the room to fight the strong for more,
  And the weak shall get their share.

"We have gathered fightin' pointers from the famous bronco steed."

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The sunrise plains are a tender haze
And the sunset seas are gray,
But I stand here, where the bright skies blaze
Over me and the big today.
What good to me is a vague "maybe"
Or a mournful "might have been,"
For the sun wheels swift from morn to morn
And the world began when I was born
And the world is mine to win.

THE WIND IS BLOWIN'

My tired hawse nickers for his own home bars;
A hoof clicks out a spark.
The dim creek flickers to the lonesome stars;
The trail twists down the dark.
The ridge pines whimper to the pines below.
The wind is blowin' and I want you so.

The birch has yellowed since I saw you last,
The Fall haze blued the creeks,
The big pine bellowed as the snow swished past,
But still, above the peaks,
The same stars twinkle that we used to know.
The wind is blowin' and I want you so.

The stars up yonder wait the end of time
  But earth fires soon go black.
I trip and wander on the trail I climb—
  A fool who will look back
To glimpse a fire dead a year ago.
The wind is blowin' and I want you so.

Who says the lover kills the man in me?
  Beneath the day's hot blue
This thing hunts cover and my heart fights free
  To laugh an hour or two.
But now it wavers like a wounded doe.
The wind is blowin' and I want you so.

ON BOOT HILL

Up from the prairie and through the pines,
Over your straggling headboard lines
  Winds of the West go by.
You must love them, you booted dead,
More than the dreamers who died in bed—
You old-timers who took your lead
  Under the open sky!

Leathery knights of the dim old trail,
Lawful fighters or scamps from jail,
  Dimly your virtues shine.
Yet who am I that I judge your wars,
Deeds that my daintier soul abhors,
Wide-open sins of the wide outdoors,
  Manlier sins than mine.

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Dear old mavericks, customs mend.
I would not glory to make an end
  Marked like a homemade sieve.
But with a touch of your own old pride
Grant me to travel the trail I ride.
Gamely and gaily, the way you died,
  Give me the nerve to live.

Ay, and for you I will dare assume
Some Valhalla of sun and room
  Over the last divide.
There, in eternally fenceless West,
Rest to your souls, if they care to rest,
Or else fresh horses beyond the crest
  And a star-speckled range to ride.

GRASS GROWN TRAILS

THE COYOTE

Trailing the last gleam after,
In the valleys emptied of light,
Ripples a whimsical laughter
Under the wings of the night.
Mocking the faded west airily,
Meeting the little bats merrily,
Over the mesas it shrills
To the red moon on the hills.

Mournfully rising and waning,
Far through the moon-silvered land
Wails a weird voice of complaining
Over the thorns and the sand.
Out of blue silences eerily.
On to the black mountains wearily,
Till the dim desert is crossed,
Wanders the cry, and is lost.

Here by the fire's ruddy streamers,
  Tired with our hopes and our fears,
We inarticulate dreamers
  Hark to the song of our years.
Up to the brooding divinity
Far in that sparkling infinity
  Cry our despair and delight,
  Voice of the Western night!

THE FREE WIND

I went and worked in a drippin' mine
'Mong the rock and the oozin' wood,
For the dark seemed lit with a dollar sign
And they told me money's good.
So I jumped and sweat for a flat-foot boss
Till my pocket bulged with pay,
But my heart it fought like a led bronc' hawse
Till I flung my drill away.

For the wind, the wind, the good free wind,
She sang from the pine divide
That the sky was blue and the young years few
And the world was big and wide!
From the poor, bare hills all gashed with scars
I rode till the range was crossed;
Then I watched the gold of sunset bars

And my camp-sparks glintin' toward the stars
And laughed at the pay I'd lost

I went and walked in the city way
Down a glitterin' canyon street,
For the thousand lights looked good and gay
And they said life there was sweet.
So the wimmen laughed while night reeled by
And the wine ran red and gold,
But their laugh was the starved wolf's huntin' cry
And their eyes were hard and old.

And the wind, the wind, the clean free wind,
She laughed through the April rains:
"Come out and live by the wine I give
In the smell of the greenin' plains!"
And I looked back once to the smoky towers
Where my face had bleached so pale,
Then loped through the lash of drivin' showers

To the uncut sod and the prairie flowers
And the old wide life o' the trail.

I went and camped in the valley trees
Where the thick leaves whispered rest,
For love lived there 'mong the honey bees,
And they told me love was best.
There the twilight lanes were cool and dim
And the orchards pink with May,
Yet my eyes they'd lift to the valley's rim
Where the desert reached away.

And the wind, the wind, the wild free wind,
She called from the web love spun
To the unbought sand of the lone trail land
And the sweet hot kiss o' the sun!
Oh, I looked back twice to the valley lass,
Then I set my spurs and sung,
For the sun sailed up above the pass
And the mornin' wind was in the grass
And my hawse and me was young.

THE MEDICINE MAN

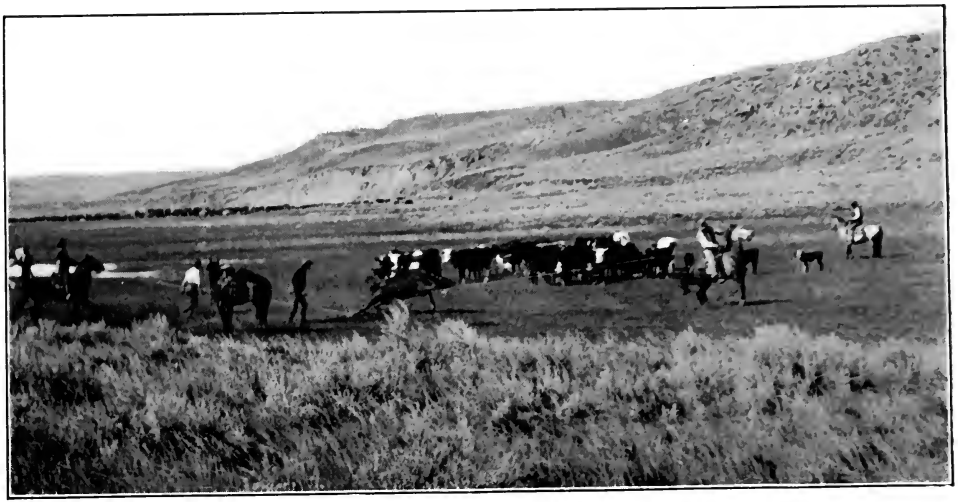
"The trail is long to the bison herd,
The prairie rotten with rain,
And look! the wings of the thunder bird
Blacken the hills again.
A medicine man the gods may balk—
Go fight for us with the thunder hawk!"

The medicine man flung out his arms.
"I am weary of woman talk
And cook-fire witching and childish charms!
I fight you the thunder hawk!"
Then he took his arrows and climbed the butte
While the warriors watched him, scared and mute.

A wind from the wings began to blow
And the arrows of rain to shoot,
As the medicine man raised high his bow,
Standing alone on the butte,
And the day went dark to the cowering band
As the arrow leaped from his steady hand.

For the thunder hawk swooped down to fight
And who in his way could stand?
The flash of his eye was blinding bright
And his wing-clap stunned the land.
The braves yelled terror and loosed the rain
And scattered far on the drowning plain.

So, after the thunder hawk swept by,
They found him, scorched and slain,
Yet (fighting with gods, who fears to die?)
He smiled with a light disdain.
That smile was glory to all his clan
But none dared touch the medicine man.



"The taut ropes sing like a banjo string
And the latigoes creak and strain."

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THE PIANO AT RED'S

'Twas a hole called Red's Saloon
In La Vaca town;
'Twas an old piano there,
Blistered, marred and brown,
And a man more battered still,
Takin's drinks for fees,
Played all night from memory
On the yellow keys.

While the glasses clinked and clashed
On the sloppy bar,
That piano's dreamy voice
Took you out and far,
Ridin' old, forgotten trails
Underneath the moon,
Till you heard a drunken yell
Back in Red's Saloon.

Whirr of wheel and slap of cards,
Talk of loss and gain,
Mixed with hum of honey bees
Down a sunny lane.
Glimpses of your mother's face,
Touch of girlish lips
Often made you lose your count
As you stacked your chips.

Scufflin' feet and thud of fists,
Curses hot as fire —
Still the music sang of love,
Longin', lost desire,
Dreams that never could have been,
Joys that couldn't stay —
While the man upon the floor
Wiped the blood away.

Then, some way, it followed you,
  Slept upon your breast,
Trailed you out across the range,
  Never let you rest;
And for days and days you'd hum
  Just one scrap of tune—
Funny place for music, though,
  Back in Red's Saloon!

A RANGER

He never made parade of tooth or claw;
He was plain as us that nursed the bawlin' herds.
Though he had a rather meanin'-lookin' jaw,
He was shy of exercisin' it with words.
As a circuit-ridin' preacher of the law,
All his preachin' was the sort that hit the nail;
He was just a common ranger, just a ridin' pilgrim stranger,
And he labored with the sinners of the trail.

Once a Yaqui knifed a woman, jealous mad,
Then hit southward with the old, old killer's plan,
And nobody missed the woman very bad,
While they'd just a little rather missed the man.
But the ranger crossed his trail and sniffed it glad,
And then loped away to bring him back again,
For he stood for peace and order on the lonely, sunny border
And his business was to hunt for sinful men!

So the trail it led him southward all the day,
Through the shinin' country of the thorn and snake,
Where the heat had drove the lizards from their play
To the shade of rock and bush and yucca stake.
And the mountains heaved and rippled far away
And the desert broiled as on the devil's prong
But he didn't mind the devil if his head kep' clear and level
And the hoofs beat out their quick and steady song.

Came the yellow west, and on far-off rise
Something black crawled up and dropped beyond the rim,
And he reached his rifle out and rubbed his eyes
While he cussed the southern hills for growin' dim.
Down a hazy 'royo came the coyote cries,
Like they laughed at him because he'd lost his mark,
And the smile that brands a fighter pulled his mouth a little tighter
As he set his spurs and rode on through the dark.

Came the moonlight on a trail that wriggled higher
Through the mountains that look into Mexico,
And the shadows strung his nerves like banjo wire
And the miles and minutes dragged unearthly slow.
Then a black mesquit spit out a thread of fire
And the canyon walls flung thunder back again,
And he caught himself and fumbled at his rifle while he grumbled
That his bridle had weight enough for ten.

Though his rifle pointed wavy-like and slack
And he grabbed for leather at his hawse's shy,
Yet he sent a soft-nosed exhortation back
That convinced the sinner—just above the eye.
So the sinner sprawled among the shadows black
While the ranger drifted north beneath the moon,
Wabblin' crazy in his saddle, workin' hard to stay astraddle
While the hoofs beat out a slow and sorry tune.

When the sheriff got up early out of bed,
How he stared and vowed his soul a total loss,
As he saw the droopy thing all blotched with red
That came ridin' in aboard a tremblin' hawse.
But "I got 'im" was the most the ranger said
And you couldn't hire him, now, to tell the tale;
He was just a quiet ranger, just a ridin' pilgrim stranger
And he labored with the sinners of the trail.

ON THE DRIVE

Oh, days whoop by with swingin' lope
  And days slip by a-sleepin',
And days must drag, with lazy rope,
  Along the trail a-creepin'.
Heeya-a! you cattle; drift away!
Heeyow! the slow hoofs sift away
And sunny dust clouds lift away,
  Along the trail a-creepin'.

My pard may sing of sighin' love
  And I of roarin' battle,
But all the time we sweat and shove
  And follow up the cattle.
Heeya-a! the bawlin' crowd of you!
Heeyow the draggin' cloud of you!
We're glad and gay and proud of you,
  We men that follow cattle!

But all the world's a movin' herd
  Where men drift on together,
And some may spur and some are spurred,
  But most are horns and leather!
Heeya-a! the rider sings along,
Heeyow! the reined hawse swings along
And drifts and drags and flings along
  The mob of horns and leather.

The outlaws fight to break away;
  The weak and lame are crawlin',
But only dead ones quit the play,
  The dust-cloud and the bawlin'.
Heeya-a! it's grief and strife to us;
Heeyow! it's child and wife to us;
By leap or limp, it's life to us;
  The dust-cloud and the bawlin'.

Some dream ahead to pastures green,
  Some stare ahead to slaughter,
But, anyway, night drops between
  And brings us rest and water.
Heeya-a! you cattle, drift away!
Heeyow! the dust-clouds lift away;
The glarin' miles will shift away
  And leave us rest and water.

SATURDAY NIGHT

Out from the ranch on a Saturday night,
Ridin' a hawse that's a shootin' star,
Close on the flanks of the flyin' daylight,
Racin' with dark for the J L Bar.
Fox-trot and canter will do for the day;
It's a gallop, my love, when I'm ridin' your way.

Up the arroyo the trippin' hoofs beat,
Flingin' the hinderin' gravel wide;
Now your light glimmers across the mesquite,
Glimpsed from the top of a rocky divide;
Down through a draw where the shadows are gay
I'm comin', my darlin', I'm ridin' your way.

West, where the sky is a-blushin' afar,
  Matchin' your cheeks as the daylight dies,
West, where the shine of a glitterin' star
  Hints of the light I will find in your eyes,
Night-birds are passin' the signal to say:
"He's comin', my lady, he's ridin' your way."

Hoof-beats are measurin' seconds so fast,
  Clickin' them off with an easy rhyme;
Minutes will grow into months at the last,
  Mebbe to bring us a marryin' time.
Life would be singin' and work would be play
If every night I was ridin' your way.

SOUTHWESTERN JUNE

Lazy little hawse, it's noon
And we've wasted saddle leather,
But the mornin's slip so soon
When we drift around together
In this lazy, shinin' weather,
Sunny, easy-goin' June.

Who kin study shamblin' herds,
How they calve or die or wander,
When the bridegroom mockin'-birds,
Singin' here and there and yonder,
Trill that June's too bright to ponder
And life's just too fine for words!

Down the desert's hazy blue
See the tall gray whirlwinds farin',
Slow, contented sort of crew
Trailin' 'cross the sunny barren,
Headed nowhere and not carin'
Just the same as me and you.

From a world of unfenced room
  Just a breath of breeze is strayin',
Triflin' with the yucca bloom
  Till its waxy bells are swayin',
  On my cheek warm kisses layin'
Soft as touch of ostrich plume.

When the July lightnin' gleams
  This brown range will start to workin',
Hills be green and tricklin' streams
  Down each deep arroyo lurkin';
  Now the sleepy land is shirkin',
Drowzin', smilin' in her dreams.

Steppin' little hawse, it's noon.
  Turquoise blue the far hills glimmer;
"Sun—sun—sun," the mockers croon
  Where the yellow range lands shimmer,
  And our sparklin' spirits simmer
For we're young yet, and it's June!

THE NIGHT HERDER

I laughed when the dawn was a-peepin'
And swore in the blaze of the noon,
But down from the stars is a-creepin'
A softer, oneasier tune.
Away, and away, and away,
The whisperin' night seems to say
Though the trail-weary cattle are sleepin'
And the desert dreams under the moon.

By day, if the roarin' herd scatters,
My heart it is steady and set,
But now, when they're quiet, it patters
Like the ball in a spinnin' roulette.
Away, and away, and away
To the rim where the heat lightnin's play—
Out there is the one trail that matters
To the valley I never forget.

There's a pass where the black shadows shiver,
Then a desert all silvery blue,
A divide, and the breaks by the river,
Then a light in the valley—and you!
Away, and away, and away—
'Tis a month till I see you by day,
But under the moon it's forever
And the weary trail winds the world through.

The coyotes are laughin' out yonder,
A happy owl whoops on the hill—
Oh, wild, lucky things that kin wander
As far and as free as they will!
Away, and away, and away,
And I that am wilder than they
Must loll in my saddle and ponder
Or sing for the cows to be still!

I see the dark river waves wrinkle;
The valley trees droop in a swoon;
You're dreamin' where valley bells tinkle
And half-asleep mockin'-birds croon.
Away, and away, and away—
Do your dainty dreams ever stray
To a camp where the desert stars twinkle
And a lone rider sings to the moon?

HAWSE WORK

Stop! there's the wild bunch to right of the
trail,
Heads up and ears up and ready to sail,
Led by a mare with the green in her eyes,
Mean as the devil and nearly as wise.
Circle 'em, boys, and the pass is the place;
Settle your heels for a rowelin' race.

Oh, hawse work! the sweep and the drift
of it!
Hawse work! the leap and the lift of it!
Who wants to fly in the empty blue sky
When he kin ride on the hawse work!

Hi! and they're off in a whirlwind. So!
Straight in the line we don't want 'em to go;
Light-footed, wild-hearted, look at 'em flit!
Head 'em, now! rowel, and turn loose the bit!
Whee! and the rip and the rush and the beat,
Rattlin' rocks and the whippin' mesquit!

Oh, hawse work! the swing and the swell of it!
Hawse work! the sing and the yell of it!
Holler goodbye to the dull and the dry;
Leave 'em behind on the hawse work.

Shorty is down with his hawse in a heap;
Might have pulled in for a gully so deep.
Reddy he rides like he's tired of his life;
Ought to be thinkin' he's got a wife—
Shrinkin' and thinkin' of bones that may crunch?
No! Yip! we've headed the mare and her bunch!

Oh, hawse work! the rip and the tear of it!
Hawse work! the dip and the dare of it!
Life flutters high when you're lookin' to die;
That is the fun of the hawse work.

Hi! and you're foolish for once, old lass,
Streakin' it straight for the trap in the pass.
Into the canyon the hoof-thunder drums—
Where is that holdup? Hump! there he comes,
Crow-hoppin' down from the bluff—too late!
Damn! and they're gone for a tour of the State!

Oh, hawse work, the rant and the fuss of it!
Hawse work! the pant and the cuss of it!
Yet when I sigh and the world is a lie
Give me a day on the hawse work!

HALF-BREED

Fathers with eyes of ancient ire,
  Old eagles shorn of flight,
Forget the breed of my blue-eyed sire
While I sit this hour by the council fire,
  All red in the fire's red light.

Chant me the day of the war-steed's prance
  And the signal fires on the buttes,
Of the Cheyenne scalps on the lifted lance,
Of the women raped from the Pawnee dance
  And the wild death trail of the Utes.

Sing me the song of the buffalo run
  To the edge of the canyon snare,
With the roaring plunge when the meat was won
And the flash of knives in the low red sun
  And the good blood smell in the air.

Chant me the might of the Manitou—
  But the old song drags and dies.
Old things have drifted the sunset through
Till the very God of the land comes new
  From the rim where the young stars rise!

Fathers, red men, the red flame falls,
  And over the dim dawn lands
My white soul hunts me again and calls
To the lanes of law and the shadow of walls
  And a woman with soft white hands.

TO HER

Cut loose a hundred rivers,
  Roaring across my trail,
Swift as the lightning quivers,
  Loud as a mountain gale.
I build me a boat of slivers;
  I weave me a sail of fur,
And ducks may founder and die
    But I
  Cross that river to her!

Bunch the deserts together,
  Hang three suns in the vault;
Scorch the lizards to leather,
  Strangle the springs with salt.
I fly with a buzzard feather,
  I dig me wells with a spur,
And snakes may famish and fry
    But I
Cross that desert to her!

Murder my sleep with revel;
Make me ride through the bogs
Knee to knee with the devil,
Just ahead of the dogs.
I harrow the Bad Lands level,
I teach the tiger to purr,
For saints may wallow and lie
But I
Go clean-hearted to her!

THE LOCOED HORSE

As I was ridin' all alone
  And winkin' in the noontime glare,
I seen a hawse all hide and bone
  Walk 'round a willow dead and bare—
Walk 'round and 'round, with limp and groan,
  And hunt the shade that wasn't there.
And then says I: "That sorry steed
Has been and et the loco weed."

Near by a spreadin' live oak laid
  Its wide, cool shadow on the ground,
But then he knowed that willow's shade
  Was just a little further 'round
And reckoned, each slow step he made,
  That in the next it would be found.
There, like a coon, his thoughts were treed
Since he had et the loco weed.

The water trail went windin' by,
  The sweet brown grass furred every slope
And he was ga'nt and starved and dry,
  Yet, on his ghostly picket rope
Led 'round and 'round, he still must try
  That hopeless circle of his hope.
He didn't think of drink or feed
Since he had et the loco weed.

A playful wild bunch topped the hill
  And stared with eyes all impish bright
And whinnered to him sweet and shrill,
  Then flung their heads and loped from sight,
Yet from that everlastin' mill
  They couldn't make him stray a mite.
He never seen their gay stampede
For he had et the loco weed.

When next that range I had to ride
  Beneath his willow tree he lay,
Just wornout hoofs and faded hide
  And big black birds that flopped away;
But yet I reckon that he died
  Still hopeful—happy—who kin say?
Sometimes I think I mostly need
To eat some sort of loco weed.

THE LONG WAY

Two miles of ridin' from the school, without
a bit of trouble—
The main road hit her father's ranch as
straight as you could fall.
I led her by a shorter cut that made the dis-
tance double
And guided her along a trail that wasn't
there at all.

The long way, the long way, but ridin' it to-
gether
I never cared a feather for the length and
never shall,
With happy hoofs that shuffled to the singin'
saddle leather
And laughin' wind that ruffled sunny miles
of chaparral.

The trail of our meanderin' would tire a
wolf to follow;
The range was hardly wide enough for us
to go around.
I dared to hope she liked it, bare hill and
thorny hollow,
And prayed that all her likin' wasn't wast-
ed on the ground.

The long way, the long way, and down the
wind we drifted,
And soon the sand was sifted in our tracks
and they were gone,
I dreamed of no forgettin' while to me her
face was lifted,
Nor knowed the sun was settin', for her
eyes were full of dawn.

Perhaps I hoped that we were lost without a
trail to guide us.
It shocked me like a bullet when the dogs
began to bark,
And suddenly, from nowhere, the ranch was
there beside us,
She reined away and left me, and the
world was in the dark.

The long way, the long way, of all my old
Septembers,
Gone gray like campfire embers when the
midnight coyote shrills,
One hour stays golden mellow—do you rec-
kon she remembers
That sunset fadin' yellow through the
notches of the hills?

FREIGHTIN'

Forty miles from Taggart's store,
  Fifty yet to grind,
Heavin' six strung out before,
  Trailer snubbed behind;
Half a world of glarin' sand
  Prayin' for a tree,
Nothin' movin' 'cross the land
  But the sun and me.

Chuck an' luck! luck an' chuck!
  Grunts the workin' wheels;
Lazy gust swirls up the dust
  From the hawses' heels.
I've been young and raced and sung,
  But I've learnt my load.
Slow, slow, on we go
  Out the stretchin' road.

Where the sky-line waves and breaks
  Shines a misty beach
And the blue of ripplin' lakes—
  Lakes no man kin reach.
Just beyond my leaders' bits
  Winds the life I know,
Ruts and 'royos, hills and pits
  In a daylong row.

Chuck an' luck! luck an' chuck!
  Life's more miss than hit.
Luck's the thing I dream and sing;
  Chuck is all I git!
'Neath the sky I crawl and fry
  Like the horny toad.
Slow, slow, on we go
  Out the stretchin' road.

When I reach that sparklin' line
  Where the ripples run,
There'll be just this road of mine
  And the dust and sun.
Mebbe on my last far hill,
  Where the dream-mist clears,
I'll be freightin', freightin' still
  Down the road of years.

Chuck an' luck! luck an' chuck!
  Sky-lines mostly lie,
Yet they beat the limp mesquit
  That goes trailin' by.
Luck enough to move my stuff—
  More I've never knowed.
Slow, slow, on we go
  Out the stretchin' road.

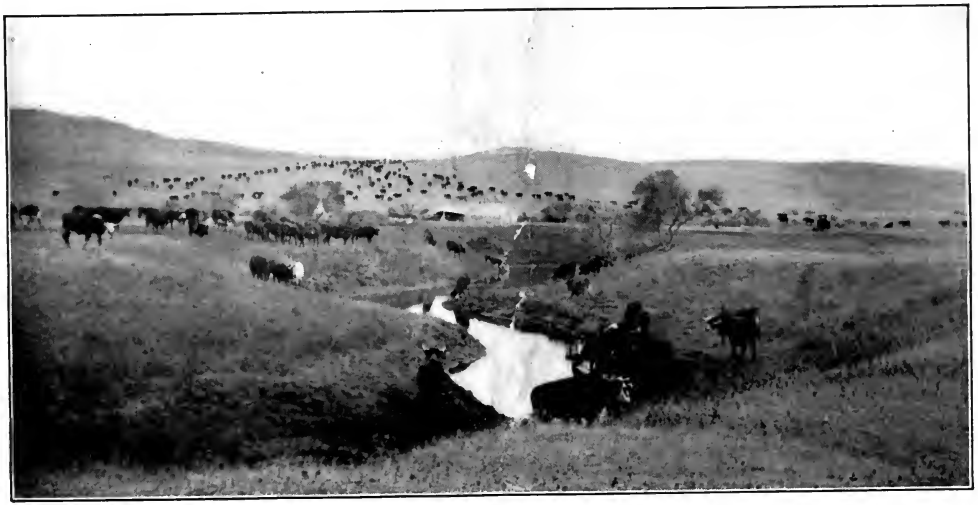
Slim and far our shadow swings;
Sun is on his knees.
Some one's campin' at the springs—
Smell it down the breeze.
Chuck time, boys, and sleep besides,
When we've chomped our hay.
Durn your dusty, trusty hides!
You've sho' earned your pay.

Chuck an' luck! luck an' chuck!
Grunts the weary wheels;
Dreams untold and sunset gold,
Cussin' sweat and meals.
If you kin, Lord, let me win,
But I'll move my load.
Slow, slow, on we go
Out the stretchin' road.

THE RAINS

You've watched the ground-hog's shadow
and the shiftin' weather signs
Till the Northern prairie starred itse'f
with flowers;
You've seen the snow a-meltin' up among the
Northern pines
And the mountain creeks a-roarin' with
the showers.
You've blessed the stranger sunlight when
the Winter days were done
And the Summer creepin' down the bud-
ded lanes.
Did you ever see a Springtime in the home
range of the sun,
When the desert land is waitin' for the
Rains?

The April days are sun and sun; the last thin cloud is fled.
It's gold above the eastern mountain crest,
Then blaze upon the yellow range all day from overhead
And then a stripe of gold across the west.
The dry wind mourns among the hills, a-huntin' trees and grass,
Then down the desert flats it rises higher
And sweeps a rollin' dust-storm up and flings it through the pass
And fills the evenin' west with smoulderin' fire.



"There's land where yet no ditches dig
Nor cranks experiment;

It's only lovely, free and big
And isn't worth a cent."

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It's sun and sun without a change the lazy length o' May
And all the little sun things own the land.
The horned toad basks and swells himse'f; the bright swifts dart and play;
The rattler hunts or dozes in the sand.
The wind comes off the desert like it brushed a bed of coals;
The sickly range grass withers down and fails;
The bony cattle bawl around the dryin' water holes,
Then stagger off along the stony trails.

The days crawl on to Summer suns that
slower blaze and wheel;
The mesas heave and quiver in the
noon.
The mountains they are ashes and the sky is
shinin' steel,
Though the mockin'-birds are singin' that
it's June.
And here and there among the hills, a-stand-
in' white and tall,
The droopin' plumes of yucca flowers
gleam,
The buzzards circle, circle where the starvin'
cattle fall
And the whole hot land seems dyin' in a
dream.

But last across the sky-line comes a thing
that's strange and new,
A little cloud of saddle blanket size.
It blackens 'long the mountains and bulges up
the blue
And shuts the weary sun-glare from our
eyes.
Then the lightnin's gash the heavens and the
thunder jars the world
And the gray of fallin' water wraps the
plains,
And 'cross the burnin' ranges, down the
wind, the word is whirled:
"Here's another year of livin', and the
Rains!"

You've seen your fat fields ripplin' with the
treasure that they hoard;
Have you seen a mountain stretch and rub
its eyes?
Or bare hills lift their streamin' faces up and
thank the Lord,
Fairly tremblin' with their gladness and
surprise?
Have you heard the 'royos singin' and the
new breeze hummin' gay,
As the greenin' ranges shed their dusty
stains—
Just a whole dead world sprung back to life
and laughin' in a day!
Did you ever see the comin' of the Rains?

THE BORDER

When the dreamers of old Coronado,
  From the hills where the heat ripples run,
Made a dust to the far Colorado
  And wagged their steel caps in the sun,
They prayed like the saint and the martyr
  And swore like the devils below,
For a man is both angel and Tartar
  In the land where the dry rivers flow.

Ay, the Border, the sun smitten Border,
  That fences the Land of the Free,
Where the desert glares grim like a warder
  And the Rio gleams on to the sea;
Where ruins, like dreamy old sages,
Hint tales of dead empires and ages,
Where a young race is rearing the stages
  Of ambitious empires to be.

Came the padres to soften the savage
And show him the heavenly goal;
Came Spaniards to piously ravage
And winnow his flesh from his soul;
Then miner and riotous herder,
Over-riding white breed of the North,
Brought progress, and new sorts of murder,
And a kind of perpetual Fourth.

Ay, the Border, the whimsical Border,
Deep purples and dazzling gold,
Soft hearts full of mirthful disorder,
Hard faces, sun wrinkled and old,
Warm kisses 'neath patio roses,
Cold lead as the luck-god disposes,
Clean valor fame never discloses,
Black trespasses laughingly told!

Then out from the peaceful old places
  Walked the Law, grave, strong and serene,
And the harsh elbow-rub of the races
  Was padded, with writs in between.
Then stilled was the strife and the racket,
  That neighborly love might advance—
With a knife in the sleeve of its jacket
  And a gun in the band of its pants.

Ay, the Border, the bright, placid Border!
  It sleeps, like a snake in the sun,
Like a "hole" tamped and primed in due order,
  Like a shining and full throated gun.
But the dust-devil dances and staggers
And the yucca flower daintily swaggers
At her birth from a cluster of daggers,
  And ever the heat ripples run.

Fierce, hot, is the Border's bright daytime,
Calm, sweet, the vast night on its plains;
White hell on the mesas, its Maytime,
A green-and-gold heaven, its Rains.
It is grimmer than slumber's dark brother,
'Tis as gay as the mocking-bird likes;
It loves like a lioness mother
And strikes as the rattlesnake strikes.

Ay, the Border, bewildering Border,
Our youngest, and oldest, domains,
Where the face of the Angel Recorder
Knits hard between chuckles and pains,
Vast peace, the clear sky's earthly double,
Witch cauldron forever a-bubble,
Home of mystery, splendor and trouble
And a people with sun in their veins.

THE BAD LANDS

No fresh green things in the Bad Lands bide;
It is all stark red and gray,
And strewn with bones that had lived and died
Ere the first man saw the day.
When the sharp crests dream in the sunset gleam
And the bat through the canyon veers,
You will sometimes catch, if you listen long,
The tones of the Bad Lands' mystic song,
A song of a million years.

The place is as dry as a crater cup,
  Yet you hear, as the stars shine free,
From the barren gulches sounding up,
  The lap of a spawning sea,
A breeze that cries where the great ferns rise
  From the pools on a new-made shore,
With the whip and whir of batlike wings
And the snarl of slimy, fighting things
  And the tread of the dinosaur.

Then the sea voice ebbs through untold
    morns,
  And the jungle voices reign—
The hunting howl and the clash of horns
  And the screech of rage and pain.
Harsh and grim in the old earth hymn
  In that far brute paradise,
And as ages drift the rough strains fall
To a single note more grim than all,
  The crack of the glacial ice.

So the song runs on, with shift and change.
Through the years that have no name,
And the late notes soar to a higher range,
But the theme is still the same.
Man's battle-cry and the guns' reply
Blend in with the old, old rhyme
That was traced in the score of the strata marks
While millenniums winked like campfire sparks
Down the winds of unguessed time.

There's a finer fight than of tooth and claw,
More clean than of blade and gun,
But, fair or foul, by the Great Bard's law
'Twill be fight till the song is done.
Not mine to sigh for the song's deep "why,"
Which only the Great Bard hears.
My soul steps out to the martial swing
Of the brave old song that the Bad Lands sing,
The song of a million years.

THE SPRINGTIME PLAINS

Heart of me, are you hearing
The drum of hoofs in the rains?
Over the Springtime plains I ride
Knee to knee with Spring
And glad as the summering sun that comes
Galloping north through the zodiac!
Heart of me, let's forget
The plains death white and still,
When lonely love through the stillness called
Like a smothered stream that sings of Summer
Under the snow on a Winter night.
Now the frost is blown from the sky
And the plains are living again.
Lark lovers sing on the sunrise trail,
Wild horses call to me out of the noon,
Watching me pass with impish eyes,
Gray coyotes laugh in the quiet dusk

And the plains are glad all day with me.
Heart of me, all the way
My heart and the hoofs keep time,
And the wide, sweet winds from the greening
world
Shout in my ears a glory song,
For nearer, nearer, mile and mile,
Over the quivering rim of the plains,
Is the valley that Spring and I love best
And the waiting eyes of you!

ON THE OREGON TRAIL

We're the prairie pilgrim crew,
  Sailin' with the sun,
Lookin' West to meet a great reward,
Trailin' toward a land that's new
  Like our fathers done,
Trustin' in our rifles and the Lord.

  A-ll set! Go ahead!
  Out the prairie trail.
Leave the woods and settlements behind.
  Trail and settle, work and fight
  Till the rollin' earth is white,—
That's the law and gospel of our kind.

Desert suns and throats o' dust,
But we never stop;
Wimmin-folks are knittin' as they ride.
We're a breed that, when we must,
Fight until we drop,
But our work and git-thar is our pride.

A-ll set! Go ahead!
Up the sandy Platte.
Leave the circle smokin' in the dawn,
So the comin' hosts will know,
'Mongst the trails of buffalo
Where their darin' brother whites have gone.

Night so black 'twould blind a fox,
  Yells and feathered sleet,
Aim the best you kin and trust to luck.
Arrows whang the wagon box
  But all hell kaint beat
Rifles from Missoury and Kentuck.

A-ll set! Go ahead!
  Leave the dead to sleep
Till the desert sees the Judgment Day.
  Mourn the good boys laid so low,
  But we'll mourn them on the go—
Pawnee! Ogalalla! Cl'ar the way!

Far across the glarin' plain
  See the mountain peaks
Glimmer 'long the edge like flecks o' foam.
Shove! you oxen, till your chain
  Stretches out and squeaks;
Somewhere out beyond that range is *Home!*

    A-ll set! Go ahead!
    Trailin' toward the West
Till the sunset's shinin' flag is furled.
  Ay, our flag's the Western skies,
  Flag that drew our fathers' eyes,
Flag that leads the white man 'round the
    world.

THE FOREST RANGERS

Red is the arch of the nightmare sky,
Red are the mountains beneath,
Bright where a million red imps leap high,
Dancing and snapping their teeth.

A keen fight! a clean fight!
Shoulder your shovels and follow
Up, while they stop in the pines at the top,
Shooting their sparks in showers.
Up, with your hats ducking under the smoke of it,
Next to the scorch of it, into the choke of it!
Fight for the ranch in the hollow.
Fight! for it is not ours.

Why are we fighting from dark to day,
From summit to canyon wall?
Twice for the Service, and once the pay—
Most, the hot fun of it all!

A stand fight! a grand fight!
Into the smother we wallow,
Stopping their march where the ridge pines parch
Over the shriveling flowers.
Stick! with the smoke steaming out of the coats of you,
Sweat in the eyes of you, fire in the throats of you!
Fight for the ranch in the hollow.
Fight! for it is not ours.

THE YELLOW STUFF

By the rim rocks on the hill
  The canyon side is rifted
Where Grasping Gabe, with pick and drill,
  Once mucked and shot and drifted.
His hairy arms were never still;
  His eyes were never lifted.

The yellow stuff! The yellow stuff!
  All day his steel would tinkle
And when the blast roared out at last
  He scanned each rocky wrinkle.
That tunnel's face was life to him,
And joy and kids and wife to him
  Its thread of yellow twinkle.

By the rim rocks where he wrought
A wall that looked eternal
Caved in one day and Gabe was caught
Snug as a walnut kernel,
Shut up with hunger, thirst and thought
In dark that was infernal.

The yellow stuff! The yellow stuff!
Then Gabe forgot its uses,
And all the gold the hills could hold
Looked like a pair of deuces.
No joy was dust and ore to him;
The gold outside was more to him
That slanted through the spruces.

By the rim rocks, far away
From helpers or beholders,
Gabe worked a lifetime in a day,
Then shoved out head and shoulders
And cried and kissed the light that lay
Upon the sunny boulders.

The yellow stuff! The yellow stuff!
He blessed the sunset shining,
Too high in grade to be assayed
And pure beyond refining.
What scum his work had doled to him,
When God would give such gold to him
Without a lick of mining!

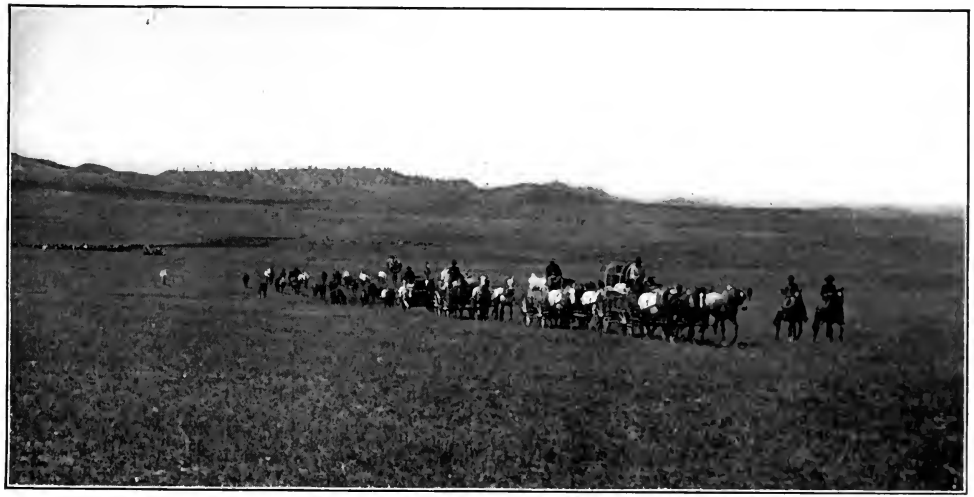
THE SHEEP-HERDER

All day across the sagebrush flat
  Beneath the sun of June,
My sheep they loaf and feed and blat
  Their never changin' tune.
And then at night time, when they lay
  As quiet as a stone,
I hear the gray wolf far away;
  "Alo-one!" he says, "Alo-one!"

A-a! m-a! ba-a! eh-eh-eh!
  The tune the woollies sing;
It's rasped my ears, it seems, for years,
  Though really just since spring;
And nothin', far as I kin see
  Around the circle's sweep,
But sky and plains, my dreams and me
  And them infernal sheep.

I've got one book—it's poetry—
A bunch of pretty wrongs
An Eastern lunger gave to me;
He said 'twas "shepherd songs."
But though that poet sure is deep
And has sweet things to say,
He never seen a herd of sheep,
Or smelt them, anyway.

A-a! ma-a! ba-a! eh-eh-eh!
My woollies greasy gray,
An awful change has hit the range
Since that old poet's day.
For you're just silly, on'ry brutes
And I look like distress
And my pipe ain't the kind that toots
And there's no "shepherdess."



"Born of a free, world-wandering race,
Little we yearned o'er an oft-turned sod."

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Yet 'way down home in Kansas State,
Bliss Township, Section Five,
There's one that promised me to wait,
The sweetest girl alive.
That's why I salt my wages down
And mend my clothes with strings,
While others blow their pay in town
For booze and other things.

A-a! ma-a! ba-a! eh-eh-eh!
My Minnie, don't be sad;
Next year we'll lease that splendid piece
That corners on your dad.
We'll drive to "literary," dear,
The way we used to do
And turn my lonesome workin' here
To happiness for you.

Suppose, down near that rattlers' den,
While I sit here and dream,
I'd see a bunch of ugly men
And hear a woman scream.
Suppose I'd let my rifle shout
And drop the men in rows,
And then the woman should turn out—
My Minnie!—just suppose.

A-a! m-a! ba-a! eh-eh-eh!
The tune would then be gay;
There is, I mind, a parson kind
Just forty miles away.
Why Eden would come back again
With sage and sheep corrals,
And I could swing a singin' pen
To write her "pastorals."

I pack a rifle on my arm
  And jump at flies that buzz;
There's nothin' here to do me harm
  I sometimes wish there was.
If through that brush above the pool
  A red should creep—and creep—
Wah! cut down on 'im! Stop, you fool!
  That's nothin' but a sheep.

A-a! ma-a! ba-a!—Hell!
  Oh, sky and plain and bluff!
Unless my mail comes up the trail
  I'm locoed, sure enough.
What's that?—a dust-whiff near the butte
  Right where my last trail ran,
A movin' speck, a—*wagon!* Hoot!
  Thank God! here comes a man.

THE OLD PROSPECTOR

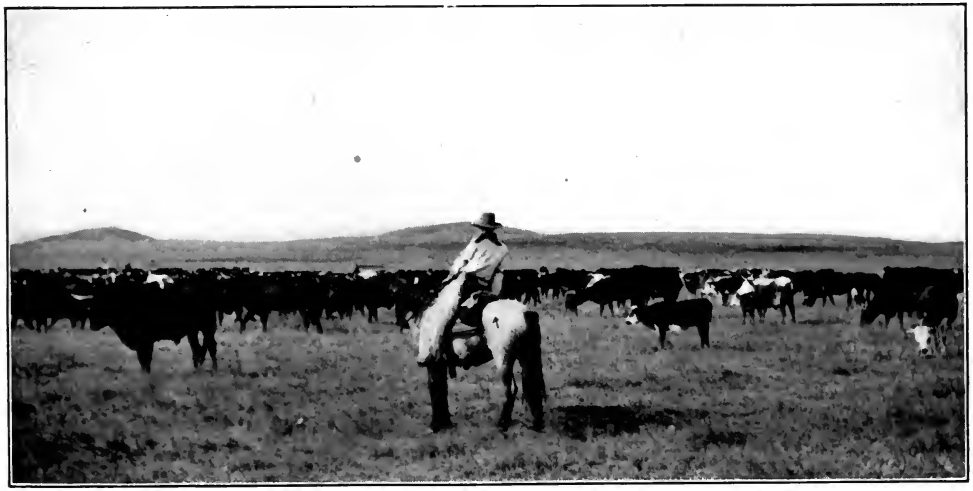
There's a song in the canyon below me
And a song in the pines overhead,
As the sunlight crawls down from the snow-line
And rustles the deer from his bed.
With mountains of green all around me
And mountains of white up above
And mountains of blue down the sky-line,
I follow the trail that I love.

My hands they are hard from the shovel,
My leg is rheumatic by streaks
And my face it is wrinkled from squintin'
At the glint of the sun on the peaks.
You pity the prospector sometimes
As if he was out of your grade.
Why, you are all prospectors, bless you!
I'm only a branch of the trade.

You prospect for wealth and for wisdom,
You prospect for love and for fame;
Our work don't just match as to details,
But the principle's mostly the same.
While I swing a pick in the mountains
You slave in the dust and the heat
And scratch with your pens for a color
And assay the float of the street.

You wail that your wisdom is salted,
That fame never pays for the mill,
That wealth hasn't half enough value
To pay you for climbin' the hill.
You even say love's El Dorado,
A pipe dream that never endures—
Well, my luck ain't all that I want it,
But I never envied you yours.

You're welcome to what the town gives you,
To prizes of laurel and rose,
But leave me the song in the pine tops,
The breath of a wind from the snows.
With mountains of green all around me
And mountains of white up above
And mountains of blue down the sky-line,
I'll follow the trail that I love.



"I wait to hear him ridin' up behind."

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GOD OF THE OPEN

God of the open, though I am so simple
Out in the wind I can travel with you,
Noons when the hot mesas ripple and dimple,
Nights when the stars glitter cool in the blue.
Too far you stand for the reach of my hand,
Yet I can feel your big heart as it beats
Friendly and warm in the sun or the storm.
Are you the same as the God of the streets?

Yours is the sunny blue roof I ride under;
Mountain and plain are the house you have.
Sometimes it roars with the wind and the thunder
But in your house I am never afraid.

He? Oh, they give him the license to live,
Aim, in their ledgers, to pay him his due,
Gather by herds to present him with words—
Words! What are words when my heart
talks with you?

God of the open, forgive an old ranger
Penned among walls where he never sees
through.
Well do I know, though their God seems a
stranger,
Earth has no room for another like you.
Shut out the roll of the wheels from my soul;
Send me a wind that is singing and sweet
Into this place where the smoke dims your
face.
Help me see you in the God of the street.

THE PASSING OF THE TRAIL

There was a sunny, savage land
  Beneath the eagle's wings,
And there, across the thorns and sand,
  Wild rovers rode as kings.
Is it a yarn from long ago
  And far across the sea?
Could that land be the land we know?
  Those roving riders we?

The trail's a lane, the trail's a lane.
  How comes it, pard of mine?
Within a day it slipped away
  And hardly left a sign.
Now history a tale has gained
  To please the younger ears—
A race of kings that rose, and reigned,
  And passed in fifty years!

Dream back beyond the cramping lanes
To glories that have been—
The camp smoke on the sunset plains,
The riders loping in:
Loose rein and rowelled heel to spare,
The wind our only guide,
For youth was in the saddle there
With half a world to ride.

The trail's a lane, the trail's a lane.
Dead is the branding fire.
The prairies wild are tame and mild,
All close-corralled with wire.
The sunburnt demigods who ranged
And laughed and lived so free
Have topped the last divide, or changed
To men like you and me.

Where, in the valley fields and fruits,
  Now hums a lively street,
We milled a mob of fighting brutes
  Among the grim mesquit.
It looks a far and fearful way—
  The trail from Now to Then—
But time is telescoped to-day,
  A hundred years in ten.

The trail's a lane, the trail's a lane.
  Our brows are scarcely seamed,
But we may scan a mighty span
  Methuselah ne'er dreamed.
Yet, pardner, we are dull and old,
  With paltry hopes and fears,
Beside those rovers gay and bold
  Far riding down the years!

LATIGO TOWN

You and I settled this section together;
Youthful and mettled and wild were we then.
You were the gladdest town out in the weather;
I was the maddest young scamp among men.
Latigo Town, ay, Latigo Town,
Child of the mesa sun-flooded and brown,
That hour of gracious romance and good leather,
Splendid, audacious, comes never again.

Many a rover as brash as a sparrow,
Loping in over the amethyst plains,
Reined for your spinning roulette and your faro,
Light-hearted sinning and fiddled refrains.

Latigo Town, ay, Latigo Town,
We made a past you are still living down,
Keen for a tussle, with salt in our marrow,
Steel in our muscles and sun in our veins!

Rowels that jingled and rigs that were tattered,
Yet how we tingled to dreams that were high!
Slim was the treasure we gathered and scattered,
But can you measure the wind and the sky?
Latigo Town, ay, Latigo Town,
Freedom and youth were a robe and a crown.
Then we were bosses of riches that mattered,
Laughing at losses of things you can buy.

Town that was fiery and careless and Spanish,
Boy that was wiry and wayward and glad—
Over the border to limbo they vanish;
Progress and order decreed they were bad.
Latigo Town, ay, Latigo Town,
Pursy with culture and civic renown,
Never censorious progress can banish
Dreams of the glorious youth that we had!

THE BUFFALO TRAIL

Deeply the buffalo trod it
  Beating it barren as brass;
Now the soft rain-fingers sod it,
  Green to the crest of the pass.
Backward it slopes into history;
Forward it lifts into mystery.
  Here is but wind in the grass.

Backward the millions assemble,
  Bannered with dust overhead,
Setting the prairie a-tremble
  Under the might of their tread.
Forward the sky-line is glistening
And to the reach of our listening
  Drifts not a sound from the dead.

Quick, or the swift seasons fade it!
Look on his works while they show.
This is the bison. He made it.
Thus say the old ones who know.
This is the bison—a-pondering
Vague as the prairie wind wandering
Over the green or the snow.

THE CAMP FIRE'S SONG

I reared your fathers long ago—
  Big, savage children—from the breast,
But in the circle of my glow
  You sit to-night a haughty guest,
For far beyond their artless day
Your lofty trail has stretched away.
  So wise! so wise!
But still the child is in your eyes.

Your fathers feared the club and claw,
  Their days were full of fight and flight;
Behind you stands your mighty law
  To guard your lonely sleep to-night,
Or, if some lawless brute run free,
A rifle gleams across your knee.
  So strong! so wise!
But still the fear is in your eyes.

They filled their little tents with spoil,
  Then vaguely longed for greater things;
Your shining cities spurn the soil
  And through your valleys plenty sings;
You span the seas they endless deemed
And rule a world they never dreamed.
  So great! so wise!
But still their longing in your eyes.

They made them gods of flood and fire;
  With simple awe they watched the stars;
You bend all powers to your desire;
  The river gods must draw your cars,
The drudging fire gods drive your fleets,
The lightning slaves about your streets.
  So proud! so wise!
Yet their old wonder in your eyes!

They dreamed a god might in them dwell
  Who lived beyond the silenced heart;
You know your mortal self so well—
  A wondrous thing in every part,
But earthbound as this gaunt mesquite
Or firelit dust about your feet.
  So hard! so wise!
But still the god is in your eyes.

Poor little primal thing am I,
  Great stranger, yet I mock your lore;
Your thickest volumes often lie
  And these still stars could tell you more,
The wind that sighs across the sand
Or I, but could you understand?
  So wise! so wise!
A puzzled child within your eyes.

NEW POEMS

PLAINS BORN

Westward from the greener places
  Where the rivers glint and twine
Stretch the gold-and-purple spaces
  Of the country that is mine;
And to lilac Rockies lifting
  Toward the deeper blue above,
There is neither flaw nor shifting
  In the title of my love.

My own! my own!
Many a silent, sunny zone,
  With the soft cloud shadows drifting
On the desert and the sown!

I would have no wall or warder
  Mar my goodly heritage,
From the yuccas of the border
  To the snowy northern sage—
Glad of every mind that passes
  Down the mesa and the plain,
Singing freedom in the grasses
  And my pony's rippling mane.

My own! my own!
There is freedom here alone,
  Under midnight's starry masses
Or the day king on his throne!

Faith must blunder on in blinkers
  Through a city's swirling rout,
For the milling herd of thinkers
  Blurs the way of wisdom out;
But where stainless sky is bending
  Over never-furrowed sod
There's an open trail ascending
  To the presence of a God!

My own! my own!
Where the troubled eyes are shown
  Heaven and earth forever blending
Round the blue rim of the known!

THE OLD CAMP COFFEE-POT

(Written for Eben W. Martin)

Old camp-mate, black and rough to see,
A hard-worked aid and ally you
In all my single-handed wars
With naked nature's savagery.
Your scars are marks of service true,
Dear loving-cup of out-o'-doors,
And history in every spot
Has battered you, old coffee-pot.

Oh, black Pandora-box of dreams!
Though dry of drink for mortal needs,
Out of your spout what fancies flow!
The flash of trout in sunny streams,
The swoop of ducks among the reeds,
The buck that paws the reddened snow—
What suns and storms, what dust and mire,
What gay, tanned faces round the fire!

So, vividly as clouds that blaze
Above a sunset's rainy red,
Scene after scene, you bring to me
  The camps and trails of other days.
  And as a shell, long dry and dead,
  Holds echoes of its native sea,
So dear old murmurs, half forgot,
Rise from your depths, old coffee-pot.

I hear the stir of horses' hoofs,
The solemn challenge of the owl,
The wind song on the piny height,
  The lilt of rain on canvas roofs,
  The far-off coyote's hungry howl,
  And all the camp sounds of the night.
They rise—a thousand things like these—
From you, old well of memories.

Our fires are dead on hill and plain
And old camp faces lost and gone,
But yet we two are left, old friend.
  And as the summers bloom and wane
  May I meet you at dusk and dawn
  By many fires before the end,
And drink to you in nectar hot
From your black throat, old coffee-pot.

MY ENEMY

All mornin' in the mesa's glare
After his crouchin' back I clattered,
And quick shots cut the heavy air
And on the rocks the hot lead spattered.
A dollar crimped, a word too free—
My enemy! My enemy!

He reined beside a rattlers' den
And faced me there to fix the winnin'.
And I wished that he would turn again,
For it was hard to kill him grinnin'.
His hands were empty, I could see.
My enemy! My enemy!

He pointed up; he pointed back.
I looked, and half forgot my hatin'.
A coyote sneaked along our track,
A buzzard hung above us, waitin'.
"Are us four all akin?" says he.
My enemy! My enemy!

The coyote crossed the desert's rim,
The buzzard circled up and faded.
I halved my only smoke with him
And when dark found us limp and jaded,
He sat and kep' the fire for me,
My enemy! My enemy!!

THE SMOKE BLUE PLAINS

Kissed me from the saddle and I still can feel it burning,
But he must have felt it cold, for ice was in my veins.
I shall always see him as he waved above the turning,
Riding down the canyon to the smoke-blue plains.
Oh, the smoke-blue plains! how I used to watch them sleeping,
Thinking peace had dimmed them with the shadow of her wings;
Now their gentle haze will seem a smoke of death a-creeping,
Drifted from the battles in the country of the kings.

Joked me to the last, and in a voice without a quaver—
Man o' mine!—but underneath the tan his cheek was pale.
Never did the nation breed a kinder or a braver
Since our fathers landed from the long sea trail.
Oh, the long sea trail he must leave me here and follow—
He that never saw a ship—to dare its chances blind,
Out the deadly reaches where the sinking steamers wallow.
Back to trampled countries that his fathers left behind.

Down beyond the plains among the fighting
and the dying,
God must watch his reckless foot and follow where it lights;
Guard the places where his blessed tousled
head is lying—
Head my shoulder pillowed through the
warm, safe nights!
Oh, the warm, safe nights, and the pines
above the shingles!
Can I stand their crooning and the patter
of the rains?
Oh, the sunny quiet, and a bridle bit that
jingles,
Coming up the canyon from the smoke-
blue plains!

THE FIGHTING SWING

Once again the regiments marching down the street,
Shoulders, legs and rifle barrels swinging all in time.
Let the slack civilian plod; ours the gayer feet,
Dancing to the music of the oldest earthly rhyme.

Left! Right! Trim and tight, hear the cadence fall.
(So the legion Caesar loved shook the plains of Gaul.)
Fighting bloods of all the earth in our pulses ring.
Step, lads, true to the dads! Back to the fighting swing!

We have kissed goodbye to care, left the fret and stew.
Now the crows may steal the corn; now the milk may spill.
All the worries in the world simmer down to two—
One is how to dodge the shells; one is how to kill.

Left! Right! Glints of light—down the lines they run.
(So the Janizary spears caught the desert sun.)
Once again the fighting steel has its ancient fling—
Flash! sway! battle array. Back to the fighting swing!

Every eye is hard and straight; every head is high.
Groping, wrangling days are done; let the leaders lead.
Regulations how to live, orders when to die—
Life and death in primer print any man can read.

Left! Right! Eat and fight! Dreams are blown to bits.
(Here's the Old Guard back to life, bound for Austerlitz.)
Drop the soft and quit the sweet; loose the arms that cling.
Blood, dust, grapple and thrust—back to the fighting swing!

OTHERS

The daybreak comes so pure and still.
He said that I was pure as dawn,
That day we climbed to Signal Hill,
Back there before the war came on.
God keep me pure as he is brave,
And fit to take his name.
I let him go and fight to save
Some other girl from shame.

Across the gulch it glimmers white,
The little house we plotted for.
We would be sitting there tonight
If he had never gone to war—
The firelight and the cricket's cheep,
My arm around his neck—
I let him go and fight to keep
Some other home from wreck.

And every day I ride to town
The wide lands talk to me of him—
The slopes with pine trees marching down,
The spread-out prairies, blue and dim.
He loved it for the freedom's sake
Almost as he loved me.
I let him go and fight to make
Some other country free.

JEFF HART

Jeff Hart rode out of the gulch to war
When the low sun yellowed the pines.
He waved to his folks in the cabin door
And yelled to the men at the mines.
The gulch kept watch till he dropped from sight—
Neighbors and girl and kin.
Jeff Hart rode out of the gulch one night;
Next morning the world came in.

His dad went back to the clinking drills
And his mother cooked for the men;
The pines branched black on the eastern hills,
Then black to the west again.
But never again, by dusk or dawn,
Were the days in the gulch the same,
For back up the trail Jeff Hart had gone
The trample of millions came.

Then never a clatter of dynamite
But echoed the guns of the Aisne,
And the coyote's wail in the woods at night
Was bitter with Belgium's pain.
We heard the snarl of a savage sea
In the pines when the wind went through,
And the strangers Jeff Hart fought to free
Grew folks to the folks he knew.

Jeff Hart has drifted for good and all,
To the ghostly bugles blown,
But the far French valley that saw him fall
Blood kin to the gulch is grown;
And his foreign folks are ours by right—
The friends that he died to win.
Jeff Hart rode out of the gulch one night;
Next morning the world came in.

BATTLE

Do you mind that old fight in The Rattles,
  Whether sheep or cattle men should rule?
Was it that, or was it like most battles—
  Just a drink too many, or a fool?
Anyhow, we all were feelin' funny,
  Strong with lopin' weeks of wind and sun,
Gay, for every hand was full of money,
  Safe, for every sinner packed a gun.
Hi! My! We know it, you and I—
  'Twas safer in the days we packed a gun.

Seems to me that Hell bulged up from under
Through the floor, volcano-like, and broke—
Spits of leaded lightin' with its thunder,
Swearin' imps a-whirlin' through the smoke—
Dodgin', shootin' fast as they were able,
Glass and flyin' splinters in a spray—
I was jammed behind a poker table,
So I had to pull and blaze away.
Hi! My! Who of us thought to die?
All we knowed was pull and blaze away.

So we had a rippin' roarin' revel
With the red firewater of the kill,
Dancin' to the pipin' of the devil—
Then the time arrived to pay the bill.
Bud and Pecos, one across the other,
Dead below the bluish powder swirls.
Bud, that sent his money to his mother!
Pecos, with the pigtailed little girls!
Hi! My! I always wonder why
The bill must go to mother and the girls!

IN THE HILLS

The shadow crawls up canyon walls; the rim rocks flush to pink
A sleepy night hawk lurches up among the pines to soar,
And we can hear a thirsty deer tiptoeing down to drink
Among the glimmering birches on the hazy canyon floor.
Sister, sister, it seems a staring pity—
Somewhere there is a city, and one time there was a war.

Around the bend the thickets end in field and garden spot,
And little ranches lifting smokes that make the twilight sweet.
Beneath the smokes the women folks are watching pan and pot,

While joking men are drifting in to smell
the sizzling meat.
Sister, sister, and is it truth or lying
That somewhere folks are dying for the
want of things to eat?

Along the hill the winds are still, and still,
blue shadows rise,
And quiet bats are winging out, but down
the canyon floor
The swift creek purls in dusky swirls that
mind me of your eyes
And keeps the stillness singing here for
ever, evermore.
Sister, sister, and is it true, I wonder—
Somewhere the loud streets thunder, and
one time there was a war.

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